A PARTY OF BACCARAT

By

DONN BYRNE

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Other Novels by Mr. Donn Byrne

HANGMAN'S HOUSE
BROTHER SAUL
MESSER MARCO POLO
THE WIND BLOWETH
BLIND RAFTERY
FIELD OF HONOR
O'MALLEY OF SHANGANAGH
CHANGELING: AND OTHER STORIES

"Early in the season I asked you to marry me."

A PARTY of BACCARAT

BY DONN BYRNE

Illustrated by
ARTHUR WILLIAM BROWN

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PROLOGUE

WHEN you have passed through the thrifty land of France from Paris to Lyons you have passed through the sanest country in the world, for here the Roman, with his genius for organisation, his agate-like logic, has united with the craft of the Celt—and by Celt I would have you understand the shrewd Welshman—the Scot, with his immense sanity. I would not have you understand the Irish as Celtic, for Celtic they are not, but polyracial, part Danish, part Spanish, part Semitic. The tall, far-seeing Roman and the small shrewd-seeing Celt, have inter-bred in this terrain to produce a repulsively commonsense-like community.

But when you come to Arles, to Avignon, to the borderland of that country which stretches from outside Marseilles to Mentone, you have arrived in a country where your mental values are false coinage. For

instance, you see palm trees that have no right botanically to be there at all. At Avignon you see a Palace of the Popes, when you know that the traditionally and actually the proper place of the Popes is Rome. Also at Arles women go about the streets quietly who have no right to be outside Mr. Ziegfeld's chorus. The poets of the country are abundant and declaim to you in a language that is neither dog-latin nor Spanish, but might be a poor relative of either, and you ask is this language still spoken. And you get the reply: "Oh, no, *maître!*"

"Then why do you write in it?" you inquire. And they tell you: "Because it is so beautiful!"

And naturally, in our coarse, Nordic way, we say: "Cuckoo!"

You come across unbelievable phenomena in this part of the world: Frenchmen who get abominably and boisterously drunk; even as——; murderers who have not murdered for gain, as in Northern France, or for revenge as in Italy; or out

of jealousy as in Spain—but because the murdered was an unsightly object, or hiccuped in church. French people will tell you that all the folk of the Riviera are mad —*tous fous, chacun, chacune!* After a space you take it for granted.

A garrulous professor—professors, like the poor, we have always with us, and they are invariably garrulous, dogmatic, and disagreeable!—a garrulous professor will tell you that it is the action of the sun's rays on the human organism, ultra-violet rays he will probably drag in, and when you are tired of listening to the old man, sometime, in some pub, when a man who has done something exceedingly noble, exceedingly crazy, is under discussion you will hear the phrase: *"Il a vu le Chévre d'Or!* He has seen the Golden Goat."

For of all this land the Golden Goat is the *genius loci.* There was a shrine to his honour somewhere between Nice and Grasse, and old crones of Provence will mumble embarrassedly when you speak of the forbidden cult. And there are hundreds

who have seen him, proud and shining, in Arles, in Grasse, on the Tête du Chien that overlooks Monte Carlo. They have seen him and never since have they been the same. The habitual things of life are nothing to them any more. They run tremendous risks, or they sit quietly and let life go by like a purling river.

What invasion brought it here, God knows. Here first were Ligurians, here Phocæans, here Phœnicians. Was it a myth out of some secret African lodge? Some symbol taking life and form from belief. The mercenaries of Rome believed in him, as they swung northward over the Alps, with their brazen helmets, their bearskin tunics, their songs of farewell to Rome and the red mouth of Lalage. Outside the harbour of Herakles, which is now Monte Carlo, and Aegitua, which is now Cannes, the remnants of Cleopatra's fleet lay chained to the wrist of Octavian, and the slim, subtle Egyptians prayed for deliverance to the Golden One of the Hills. And against the People of the Goat, the Sara-

cens, with their white horses, their soft plodding white camels, fought more savagely than against the Christians, for they hated idols, this flaming folk, afire with the purity of God.

But none, nothing has as yet stamped it out, neither the curved swords of Islam, nor the soft bells of Our Lady's churches. With golden curving horns, with light golden feet, it still has power in the land of Provence. Here it wields magic over the native and the stranger, for the goat always wields magic, whether it is the white goat of the Senigusseh lodges in the Sahara, or the black goat of northern demonism. It takes the strength from the strong; the gifted are content to let the fruitful day go by; the prudent man goes crazy at the gaming tables; the chaste wife becomes a mænad; unrest creeps into the contented man. Here is the land of the Golden Goat. Here are the Alps for his light feathery feet; here are gaming tables, villas, palaces, dancing halls, where folk may forget the fine, frosty, Northern mornings, the mir-

acle of the falling snow, the climate that puts iron in the blood; here are his colours, the golden orange blossom, the golden mimosa . . .

I remember an old French clergyman, who must have been very crazy or a great heretic, asking me why I was on the Côte d'Azur. . . .

"Because I need a rest, my father."

"There can be no rest, my big son, where God is not."

"Is not God here?" I asked in something like terror. But he gave me no answer.

"Then what is here, my father?"

But I need not have asked him, for could I not, with my own eyes, see the purple rocks, fit only for the lightest feet that animals have; could I not look at the dionysial rout of the dancing floors, the sacrificial tension of the gaming tables; could I not see everywhere about me the mimosa in clouds of gold . . . ?

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A PARTY OF BACCARAT

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CHAPTER I

HER bank had run four times now, so that her original stake of a hundred francs had become eight hundred, less the percentage that the swift croupier withdrew each time, and slipped into the slot in the green baize. He was a sleek, northern Italian, with a waxed moustache. With rapid fingers he counted and sorted the yellow, red, and white chips. He leaned back in his chair with his wooden shovel held against his shoulder like a sword.

"A bank of thirty-five louis! A bank of seven hundred francs!" He looked around the table inquiringly. "Who goes banco!"

She sat back with the little sluice-like box in front of her, in which the cards were

clipped. In any other place but the baccarat rooms of a French casino, she would have had men all about her, eager to dance with her, to talk to her, but here her blonde beauty, her slim, athletic figure drew no attention. Here at midnight, under the harsh lights, in the hot, scented rooms, where the cigarette smoke hung like a cloud beneath the roof, men had no thought of beauty. They were only interested in the passing of the "shoe," as the *chemin-de-fer* box is called, from hand to hand around the table. They had only curiosity for what cards were to come next clicking on the green baize, and if they spoke to a woman it was only to complain about their luck or to tell triumphantly of a big coup brought off, of a bank they had that run seven times, or of how they had not had a bank since God knows when, exactly as a garrulous golfer will tell you of the four he got at the all-but-six-hundred-yard hole, or how he can't seem to get down under three putts anywhere. There is nothing so sexless as the gambling-rooms of the Riviera.

"Who goes banco?" asked the croupier commandingly. "If none goes banco, make your punts."

She looked around inquiringly, for she felt her luck was in, and she would like to have had somebody bet the full amount. As she turned around you could see that, but for a point or two, she was very beautiful. First, her eyes were of that peculiar warm blue of a sea with the sun on it, a Southern sea. Not the Mediterranean chiming outside was more blue than they. Her hair was fair hair, real golden hair, as if every hair on her shingled head were a wire neatly beaten out by the most cunning of goldsmiths. Her nose and chin were small but her mouth was a little large for beauty. When she smiled her whole face lit up, as though something within had been lit, a candle of fine wax lit within. The sheer beauty of her teeth made one gasp. They were alive, and there was nothing animal about them. You got the impression of something wonderful and strong, physically and nervously strong, and very clean.

"Nobody bancos me?" she asked.

You would have been in doubt as to her nationality until then, although she had not the now wistful, now merry look of Irishwomen, nor the rather unmeant insolent look of Englishwomen. But when she spoke in that quick straight way, you knew she was American.

"No, Madame," the croupier said, "nobody bancos you. Ladies, gentlemen, play your game!"

A table at the end of the room, where the big play was going on, in thousands and in tens of thousands, had broken up while the cards were being re-shuffled, and the players were strolling about, killing time. One pock-marked Spaniard, a professional gambler, strolled over, looked at the stake on the table.

"Banco!" he smiled.

She smiled back at him, for in the baccarat rooms all the regulars are friends. They may not know one another's names, but they have been through the mill of bad and good luck, all of them, and there is a

sort of comradeship, as there is between people who have seen war.

"Banco is called," the croupier twirled his moustache. The punters withdrew their stakes. She leaned forward to draw the cards. Click! a card for the Spaniard. Click! a card for her. Click! a card for him!

"Why, there she is," a girl's voice called. "Oh, Angie, someone to see you."

"Hello, Angie," said a quiet voice.

She turned round swiftly, and for one dazed second looked at him.

"Morrie Sullivan," she said. She looked at her old sweetheart of two years ago in America hardly believing it could be he. "Why, Morrie Sullivan!"

"Banco!" breathed the Spaniard softly.

"Banco, Madame," the croupier reminded her.

She turned and clicked a card out of the box for herself. The Spaniard threw down a five and a four, nine, a natural. She looked at her own hand—two queens, nothing. The croupier gathered up the chips

and handed them to the pock-marked professional.

"Hard luck, Angie," said Sullivan. "Come on, let's go and talk."

She threw a little longing look at the green baize, hesitated a fraction of a second, and rose. The note-changer called out:

"Place free table number nineteen!"

They moved off to a lounge. Her heart was thumping slightly. Two years ago, was it? since they had left America, and it seemed a century, and yet here was Morrie Sullivan, just as though it were yesterday. Morrie, black-haired, black-eyed, bronzed in the skin, alert and lithe. A wave of embarrassment came over her. There was so much to say; and yet she didn't know what to say.

"You haven't changed, Morrie," she ventured, "not the least little bit."

He looked at her searchingly.

"You have, Angie."

"How, Morrie? Looking old? Going off?"

"I came to marry you and take you home."

"No, Angie," he said in that old serious way of his she remembered so well. "You're prettier than ever, I think. A little tired-looking. But—there's a sort of gloss on you I don't like. You aren't just the healthy little kid of two years ago."

"Don't be silly, Morrie. Tell me, what brings you to Var?"

"What brought me to Var, Angie, was to take you home."

"How, Morrie?" she laughed.

"To marry you and take you home."

She turned aside quickly. Beneath this acquired gloss, this nonchalance of the Riviera, her heart beat quickly, and the little tears came into her eyes.

"Well, Angie, what about it?"

At the end of the rooms where the big baccarat game was going on, Dariano, the banker, the head of the Greek syndicate, had closed the game for the night. He had risen suddenly in the midst of dealing, tipped the shoe, and sent the cards flying through the air, having either lost or won a half million francs. He came down the

room, a corpulent, wheezing figure, with greying hair and greying moustache, his impassive, quasi-oriental face showing no evidence of how the game had gone for him. He was smoking his heavy Egyptian cigarette. For one instant he stopped before Angela.

"Any luck?" he asked smilingly.

"Still out," she said.

"It will come," he bowed and went on. His eye never rested on young Sullivan beside her.

"Oh, Morrie," she said, "do you know who that is—that's Dariano, the big Greek gambler. You've read about him in the papers, haven't you?" She was flushed. Her eyes were sparkling. Young Sullivan looked at her queerly.

"Well, what about what I asked you, Angie?"

"Morrie," she told him, "surely you don't want me to answer you right off like that. You can't do things like that, Morrie. Come, I'm through with gambling for to-

night. Let's go and dance, Morrie. Will you dance?"

"Will I dance?" he grinned. "Just lead me to where this dancing is!"

CHAPTER II

SHE sat at her bedroom window in the big hotel in a daze of thinking. Her mother had not yet returned from the Casino. "Just one more dance, dearie," Mrs. Turnbull had said, and gone off into the mob with her professional partner, but Angela knew that her mother would dance until four in the morning. Morrie had seen her home. They had danced and talked for an hour about the old friends at Darien and New Canaan. "And how is this one? And what has happened to this other? And has Judy married Bill yet?" And little by little the new atmosphere fell away. The band moaning the blues became just a rather objectionable sound, and the mob of sleek dancing men and jewelled, sophisticated women did not exist. Only once or twice was she brought back with a start into the new atmosphere—when a couple

or a party would adjourn to the gambling rooms, and return clicking chips in their pockets, or talking about their luck. Then it would take her a few moments to get back to New England.

He had seen her home to her hotel, and, a strange thing, when he was going to kiss her good-night she had avoided him. "Not to-night! Please, Morrie, not to-night!" And two years ago in America she would have kissed him as a matter of course, happily, innocently as a child. She wished she could have kissed him in the old way. It was April now. Spring was here, and spring would be in America, too.

Without, the Mediterranean broke on the shore with a shallow rolling noise, but in her ears now was the chink of pebbles on the edge of Long Island Sound. The garden of the great hotel was a maze of palm trees and flowers, but in America the fields were green, the trees were coming along with their peeping buds, trees one loved—not trees one looked at and admired, the copper beech, with its proud

flaunting head, the candles of the horse chestnut, the tall elm, the hardy hickory, and the little apple trees, dressed like brides. And the noises one heard at night there, a dog barking occasionally, the shrilling of the little frogs. And from the shore of the Sound the cheerful sights one saw, the Fall River, and the New Bedford boats going up the water a blaze of cheerful light, the sailing ships coming down from Nova Scotia, the big regattas, with the yachts heeling as they rounded the marks. Here one saw nothing but the dingy sails of the fishing boats, red sails, ugly and patched.

Why couldn't she go back there and live happily with Morrie? What was there against it? Nothing. And yet she knew in her heart, in the inmost recesses of her heart, that she couldn't, she wouldn't.

She heard the soft bump of the elevator stopping, and her mother's step along the corridor. The next moment the door was opened and the light clicked on. The door between the rooms opened slowly, and a

little beam of yellow light shone across the bed.

"Aren't you asleep, Angie?" her mother asked.

"No, dear. I was sitting by the window thinking. Did you have a good time?"

"Splendid. Washer is a wonderful dancer. To-morrow, Angie, I'm going to take him to Nice in the afternoon, to the *thé dansant* at the Negresco." Her mother's brow puckered a little. "I wish he weren't so dreadfully expensive."

She turned the light on, and sat on the edge of the bed. It was difficult to think of Mrs. Turnbull as a woman of forty-five. One might easily have taken her for nine years less. A small, dark woman, with brown emotional eyes, merry eyes, there was little resemblance between her and her daughter. They were often taken for friends, which always pleased Mrs. Turnbull, for she was secretly ashamed of having a girl so big as Angela. She was small and dark, where Angela was tall and fair; her face was pretty, the merry brown eyes,

the slightly upturned nose, the whole air of being a jolly little woman—where Angela was all but beautiful.

"Angela," she asked suddenly, "what is Morrie Sullivan doing here at Var?"

"Oh, he just turned up. Everybody turns up at Var sooner or later."

"Angie," her mother warned, "you're not thinking of doing anything foolish?"

"No, Mother, no," she answered wearily. "You must go to bed. You're tired."

"Did you see Dariano to-night?"

"Just for a moment, Mother, when his game was over."

"Was Morrie Sullivan with you when you saw him?"

"Yes, Mother."

"Oh, Angie, I hope you won't do anything foolish."

"I won't, dear. Now, go to bed. I'm going myself."

"I'm only thinking for your own good, Angie."

"I know, dear. Good-night."

"What is Morrie Sullivan doing here at Var?"

CHAPTER III

ONLY four years before her father had died. He had been a small man, a member of a firm of bond brokers in Wall Street, who used to come home every evening from New York on the club train, and pass the rest of the evening dozing or working about the house. The Colonial cottage he had bought near New Canaan was a passion with him, and week ends he would spend in the garden in summer, and in winter tinkering about the heating plant, the water supply, or talking to local builders and masons of improvements he wished made in spring, a red brick wall built here, a portion of the garden tiled, where flowers might grow between the slabs. He was always worrying about the apple trees, having surgeons come to repair them. Or he would sit deeply engrossed in a manual of bee culture, planning to have hives in the

garden. And then one Saturday afternoon, sitting in his chair, his bad heart stopped labouring, and he died.

Angela, who had been at college when it happened, came home at once. Her mother was tragic. Angela was calm. She had loved the little man, only it was so hard to get close to him. There were so many business worries on his mind that one had to be careful not to bother him. Sometimes he would be so irritable that the slightest thing would drive him into a fit of temper, terrible to see, damning and blasting everything and everybody. Angela understood. She was a little glad when he died. Poor daddy! she thought, he will have a rest now.

He left behind him a hundred thousand dollars, the one beautiful daughter and the frivolous, pretty wife whom he had allowed to go her own way, partly because he was too tired to argue with her, mainly because he was always in love with her.

Mrs. Turnbull was content for a year or so with New Canaan, Virginia Hot

Springs, and Florida, but for years before her husband's death, she had wanted to go to France for a winter. The accounts of the great tennis tournaments at Cannes, of the battle of flowers at Nice, the pictures of the gardens at Monte Carlo, all excited her. Mr. Turnbull had promised to take three months' rest sometime and go with her, but he had never been able to get away. But now she was free; she had a goodish income and the dream of her life could be realized.

"You see, Angie," she persuaded. "It's so much cheaper living abroad, and the exchange is so good. We could get twice as much for our money in the South of France as we can get here. Look at the dreadful prices we were paying at Miami. Look at what clothes cost. My dear, we could do four times as well in France as here."

The idea of a Riviera season appealed to Angela as well as to her mother, though there was not the same fever for it in her veins that her mother had. Twenty years old, she had not as yet thought seriously of

marriage. The men she knew were good friends, good comrades. In winter it was tremendous sport to go bob-sleighing with them. There were dances at the golf club, there were skating parties. In summer there was bathing and dancing and tennis. One was a comrade to them, not a potential woman. One danced with them. One kissed them occasionally, but that was more a comradely act than an expression of sex.

All of them she liked, but one she liked more than any other, and that was young Morrie Sullivan. He was five years older than she, and where the other boys or men of twenty-five were setting gaily about life, he was serious. When he left the University he refused to go into business, or law, or politics. An aunt in Seattle had left him a small fortune, and he had immediately invested it in a farm. All his friends had laughed at him, but he just grinned and said nothing. He worked on it harder than any of his hired men. To Angie he spoke occasionally. He had a trick of long si-

lences, and of then bursting suddenly into speech:

"You know, Angie," he said, "your father likes me, but he thinks I'm a damned fool. Your mother dislikes me. She thinks a farm is for hoboes. But look-a-here, Angie, I'm trying to get at something."

"Yes, Morrie," she would prompt, afraid lest he should go off into one of his long silences again.

"You see, Angie," he would go ahead, "this New England means something to me. My people came over with Lafayette —two uncles from the old Irish Brigade in France—and they didn't go back with Lafayette. They stayed. They must have loved New England and put their hearts into their fighting, or I wouldn't love it as I do. I suppose it's funny—I've heard of people loving Ireland and Scotland and all that—but I've never heard of anyone loving New England before."

"It isn't funny at all, Morrie," she said.

"Well, then, Angie, here's the idea. This part around here, all the way up the

Sound sooner or later, is going to be twisted and warped from what it was created for. Angie, I'm sick of seeing this good, rich soil being prostituted for golf links, for estates aping big English houses. I'm sick of seeing new raw cottages huddled together, whose owners cut for the eight o'clock train in the morning and come back at six-thirty, and know nothing of the country and care nothing. I'm sick of seeing gambles in real estate. There's something wrong about it, Angie. It's like bottling air, and selling it at so much a breath.

"Well, Angie, here it is. It's not back to the land and it's not health. It's probably sentiment. Nothing can stop the big towns spreading. But there'll be fifty acres of New England that as long as I live, and after that, if I leave anyone behind, will be used for the purpose for which ground was created, for the growing of food and the grazing of cattle, and for hard, happy work, Angela. Crazy?"

"No, not crazy!"

"How'd you like to be a farmer's wife, Angela?"

"I'd love it."

And then they'd both laugh.

She often thought, sitting in her father's garden among the apple trees, how pleasant Morrie Sullivan's old house was, the low-ceilinged rooms, the deep fireplaces, the cleanliness and quaintness of it. The old Connecticut Yankee housekeeper took it for granted, and Morrie himself paid little attention to it, for his mind was too full of farming and farming machinery to have time for æsthetics, but Angela knew it was a house one could love. When you entered its doors you felt its kindness to you, as you feel kindness in shaking hands with people. Though he had often laughingly asked her to marry him and come and live in the gentle house yet she could never take it seriously. Her time had not come for that. Some day she would marry, she knew, thinking of it in that vague way one thinks of the certainty of

death. In her way she loved Morrie, the seriousness of him; she liked the lithe, athletic look of him; she liked his smile—when he smiled; she liked his abruptness.

The day they sailed for France her mother and she had been inundated with attentions—flowers, books, elaborate boxes of candy. Before the ship sailed Morrie had pushed his way up the gangplank and to their side.

"Good-bye, Mrs. Turnbull," he said gravely to her mother, "I hope you have a splendid time."

"Good-bye, Morrie."

He turned to Angela.

"I haven't brought you books or flowers or anything," he said ruefully. "I don't seem to think of those things at all. I just came to wish you good luck, Angela, and tell you to take care of yourself."

"Isn't that better than flowers, Morrie?"

"Is it, Angela? Angela, don't stay away too long."

CHAPTER IV

THEY had come south to Nice in October, staying in Paris only a few days. For a month yet the Riviera would be empty. Nice was only a drowsing Midi town. There was nothing to do or see, except to sit for an hour under the awnings of a café, and drink coffee. But Monte Carlo was only three quarters of an hour's run from there, and to Monte they went every afternoon. As she got her card of admission Angela felt a thrill she had never known in her life. Within her breast something seemed to vibrate, some plexus of nerves had been set jingling. The queer solemn tone of the place, so different from what she had expected, amazed her and attracted her, and when she entered the rooms some portion of brain or soul that had been asleep until now, sprang awake, keen, concentrated. The long green tables,

with the great roulette wheels in the middle, the impassive, black-garbed officials, the attendants in knee breeches, the faces of the players about the tables, all seemed, though she had never seen them before, natural to her, normal. Her mother looked around.

"I must confess," said Mrs. Turnbull, "that I am very disappointed. It's dull," she said. "Angela," she discovered suddenly, "there are no smart people here."

"No, darling. It's not the season yet." She wished her mother would go, so that she could sit down and play at the tables, and watch the fascinating spin of the wheel, the flash of colour, the race of the marble around the edge, the uncertainty as to where it would stop when it began to click-click-click about the numbers. She became impatient.

"Mother," she said, "you go and look around. I want to see this thing, see how it works."

"Are you going to play, Angela?"

"Just a little, dear."

"It doesn't appeal to me at all," said Mrs. Turnbull. "I'll look around and go out and see the gardens. Don't stay too long."

It was the first of a month's afternoons at Monte. In a day she mastered the intricacies of betting columns and dozens on three numbers, on six numbers, and on the even chances. She was a shrewd player, knowing when her luck was in and going bravely ahead, and when she felt her luck was out, playing them, in that poker phrase, close to her chest. In a month she had won about six thousand francs, which is, in money, three hundred dollars.

Her mother bothered her but little. Mrs. Turnbull had met a good many Americans in Nice, and in the afternoons she continued to go to the Jetée Promenade Casino for tea and dancing, or she would go around the little shops, buying a trinket here, or conferring with some little dressmaker about frocks "for the season"; or going on long rides to the outlying Alpine villages, Vence, Gourdon, Éze.

"I can't make out what attraction that horrible Monte Carlo has for you, Angela," she would say. But she was glad enough to see Angela go off every afternoon. She felt that Angela might not approve of her dancing, of her harmless frivolity.

What attraction Monte Carlo had for Angela she herself could not properly define. But she looked forward, on rising in the morning, to the afternoon's trip. At two o'clock the big 'buses left Nice, and, pursuing that winding precipitous road along the bluest of blue seas, they came into the pretty town in less than an hour. They passed Nice harbour, where the boats for Corsica lay; steamboats with romantic names, like *Général Bonaparte;* a Greek barquentine with Syracuse on her counter as her home port; lateen-rigged craft putting in for cargo on their way from Marseilles to Sicily. They passed the queer little headlands that seemed to apologize to the Mediterranean for intruding on her blue bosom—Cap d'Ail, Cap Ferrat. On

their left the surly little Alps rose, with their strange, ghost-haunted, rock-hewn towns, half Roman and half Saracen, Éze, La Turbie. For none of these had Angela or the passengers any eye. They looked forward to the Saracenesque dance of the Casino. The 'bus left the slouching atmosphere of France, and came into the trim principality. No longer were there careless, unkempt gendarmes, but figures in helmets and gold braid and swords, with gloves spotless as the Alpine snows. No longer were rocks barren but for the quaint modest Alpine flowers, but waving palm trees, with tops like the plumes on a field marshal's head-dress, flaunting red and blue and yellow flowers. For these none had eyes.

They would descend from the flamboyant, vulgar 'bus, and, walking casually, as though they really had nothing but an academic interest in the affair of gambling, they would mount the Casino steps, turning round to glance at the mountains, as though they were not sure whether they

would go in at all—would it not be better to go on the funicular up to La Turbie? They would appear to be thinking, while the doorkeepers smiled their subtle smile with their eyes alone. They would go in at last, showing their cards. About them would be the quiet cathedral-like silence of the great gambling rooms, broken only by the voices of the croupiers as they announced the result of the spin.

"Thirty-two wins; red; the even number; and below the line!"

There would be the rattle of chips as the losers' stakes were gathered in; a flick-flick as the winner's gains were counted out.

"Gentlemen, ladies, decide your play!"

Each table was very much like another. At each would be seated the people who worked on some esoteric system of numbers; entering the result of each spin in a little book, and putting on five-franc pieces in what appeared to be the craziest way—a piece on the first four numbers, which, if it won, would bring them in eight pieces for one, a chip on six other numbers which,

winning, would gain six, two chips on red or "colour" (there is no "black" at Monte Carlo!), even chances; a two to one shot on the first dozen. The system players ranged all the way from keen young American business men to frowsy ex-professors of mathematics with grizzled beards; from hard-faced women in the thirties to old ladies who wore the dress and had the manner of the early days of Queen Victoria, and resembled her a little, God knows by what mysterious transfusion of habit and thought. Here were men and women, just gambling, their faces flushed with excitement, or white with tension. A swarthy officer of Moroccan cavalry, in burnous and red top boots, might swagger up to the table and fling a bundle of notes on red.

"Tout va aux billets! The whole roll goes."

"Bien, monsieur."

An old lady would hand five louis, a hundred francs, to the croupier.

"Les six derniers! The last six numbers."

"Bien, Madame!"

There was the click of rakes against chips as the seated players pushed their stakes into place. The croupier gave a deft twirl to the wheel, span the ball.

"Rien ne va plus! Nothing more goes!"

A moment of tension. The ball clicks into place. The impassive croupier looks up.

"Zero!"

The rattle of chips as the second croupier gathers in all the money laid on numbers. The players look sullen or white, or simply sneer.

"Gentlemen, ladies, decide your game!"

CHAPTER V

IT was not the fact of losing money that bothered Angela, for she was not losing. She was still well ahead, but something within her seemed always to say: "Look out, Angie! Look out!" Though it was hardly two months since she had left America yet it already seemed a year, so closely had this new atmosphere enveloped her. All the time she seemed to hear this warning voice, and she would examine herself and say:

"What am I doing that's wrong, anyway? I'm not drinking cocktails as the other women are doing. I'm not dancing hectically, as even my mother is doing. No man has tried to bother me. What am I doing that's wrong then? I'm only passing a few hours in the afternoon—hours that would bore me at Nice. I'm not gambling. Of course I'm not gambling. Haven't I

played bridge all my life for a quarter a hundred, and never felt the least inclined to ask higher stakes or anything like that? Then what am I doing that's wrong? Nothing."

And yet the voice wouldn't stop: "Look out, Angie, look out!"

So that she was not in the least averse when her mother suggested they move to Var. Mrs. Turnbull, in her month's sojourn at Nice, had picked up an entirely new set of values. Nice, which she had looked upon in America as the crowning city, had suddenly become a sort of Coney Island in her eyes. "It's only for trippers, Angela. *'Rastas'*" (she had already learned the slang word for South Americans), "and that sort of person. Everybody of any standing lives at Var. Grand dukes and rajahs and Italian princes, people worth knowing, Angela. And Nice," she sighed, "is so expensive."

So they went to Var, which is, God knoweth, after its kind, the prettiest town in the world. There it nestles at the foot of

the Alpine hills, brown, drowsy as the Bermudas. Its streets are gay with plantain trees. Its small cafés are the real Provençal cafés. No great charbancs roar through the streets. Back of high walls drowse villas covered with creepers. Southward, in the blue Mediterranean sea, not a stone's throw from land, one would think, are the crouching islands, Saint Marguerite, and Saint Honorat—Saint Marguerite, where the Man in the Iron Mask spent his fearful occult prison days, and Saint Honorat of the brown monks. Westward rose the crenelated range of the Esterel, proud and sombre flaring into purple and gold when the sun went down. Northward the soft Alpine hills, not terrible as the frowning peaks at Monaco. It was like a town one dreamed of. And the funny little Casino, so innocuous-looking, where there was no roulette, only a funny game called baccarat. It wasn't open as yet, and would not be until the middle of November. In France they didn't allow roulette. There would be no clicking, hypnotic wheel. If

she had been gambling, and she admitted to herself now she might have been, there would be no temptation toward it here. Away from the fetid "kitchen" of Monte Carlo, a great peace descended on her, and, it seemed to her, she was herself again, dreaming in college of the little French towns she would one day visit, towns as in the books of Mr. W. J. Locke. The excursions she had despised at Nice she now welcomed a hundredfold, and now always she thought of Morrie Sullivan. Going up the Gorges du Loup, and seeing the funny little river under the bridge, so clear that one could see the trout in the pools, she would say: "If Morrie were here he would love this." At Gourdon, that little mountain village perched on a rock, so high that it is terrible, she leaned over the parapet looking into the valley—her eyes changing from that deep blue into the soft purple they had when she was dreaming—she would wish he were there, to hold hands for an instant, or perhaps, just to be silent together. At Vence, with its Saracen

arches, its little square with the fountain enclosed by trees, the strange foreign beauty of it made her stop breathing. Unconsciously she said: "Oh, Morrie!"

One day she went with a party of acquaintances from Var to Mentone, going through Nice, that was still gay with the Midi autumn, along the road of the Grand Corniche, a slender ribbon of white across the violet mountains. . . . They were to lunch at Mentone, and return by Monte Carlo, stopping an hour in the desired town to look on at the strange, mad people who played roulette. Mrs. Turnbull had met a young man from Mount Kisco, and was looking forward to dancing the blues with him at the Café de Paris. They stopped to look down on the purple dream of Éze. They stopped for a quarter of an hour at La Turbie. The driver was a young Italian who had been in New England, and who had flourished in Stamford as the green bay tree, until a little matter of bootlegging—a mistake in the strategy of it, had sent him home to his native Genoa.

And because Angela came from New Canaan, and because she was the golden athletic type whom the Italians love as goddesses, he was always at her beck and call, ready to do anything for her, to show her any part of the country, to descend upon an erring tradesman when she was overcharged, and interlarding his respectful conversation with many strange oaths, which he took to be the President's American as spoken by the better classes.

She was looking over the parapet on the valley below, from the spot where Cæsar Augustus had raised a statue to himself to define the limits of Rome from the province of Gaul. In the distance, like a mirage in a desert, above a desert of olive and fig trees, shone the white Casino. Eastward was the gorge of Ventimiglia, where Italy began, grim as old Rome. Southward was the violet Mediterranean sea. The little Casino, so small against the vast water, against the surly, over-lapping Alps, was sending out its call to her, and her eyes were seeing, not the soft Alpine autumn,

blue sky and bluer sea, but the ornate all-but-silent rooms of the Casino, the green baize, the blur of the moving wheel. She had noticed another car in La Turbie with twenty-nine on its number plate. Was it a sign? Would twenty-nine be lucky . . .?

"Eh, Miss Angela, you like see something dam' interesting, ver' good, eh?"

She turned around. The young Italian driver was standing beside her, cap in hand.

"What is it, Benito?"

"*Cosa segreta!* Ver' dam' fine. Ver' few see! Twenty minutes. You like come."

"All right, Benito."

She jumped into the back of the car, and the big Lancia hurled itself down the slope toward Monte Carlo, turning rocks by a hair's breadth, skimming precipices, missing a patrol of *Chasseurs Alpins* by a foot. They raced past little farm-houses, with their terraced fields, swept through a spinney of olive trees. The car stopped.

"*Eccolo!*"

"But what?" Angela asked.

She saw a little field, with the humps of graves in it, quiet, well-tended, surrounded by a stone wall. Each grave was like another, a small cross over each.

"A war cemetery?" she asked.

Benito grinned. He had his nation's liking for a grim joke.

"Si, signorin'—War! War against the Casino!"

She looked more closely. On each cross was a number; no name. At one end she could see number one. At another number thirty-one. Thirty-one graves, each like the other, regular, well-tended, anonymous. There were no flowers, only crisp, well-shorn grass, a cross with a number. Suddenly she understood, and in the hot sunshine she shivered with the cold.

"But there are only thirty-one," she said, more to herself than to the driver. "In all its history there are only thirty-one."

Benito gave a quick glance up and down the road; vaulted the stone wall and made

his way to the centre. He lifted a sod from one of the hummocks. It was new.

"Casino gardeners," he grinned, "best in the world."

"Oh, put it back, Benito," she all but cried.

He replaced the sod into position and came back.

"*La bella comedia!* Thirty-one!"

He started the car again. Threw a glance over his shoulder.

"Ver' dam' fools!" he uttered the epitaph. He remembered his American language. "Cuckoo!" he smiled triumphantly.

Through the swift ride to Mentone, through the lunch, through the ride back to Monaco, the memory of the small graveyard haunted her, terrified her. For in the places where the dead lay she had always been accustomed to find the atmosphere of peace. Winds seemed gentler there; and there were always friendly trees. Old graveyards she had known came back to her mind, and ancient headstones that

breathed love and care. There was one in an old God's Acre of New England not far from home, of a husband and wife of a hundred years before. Through the yellow stonework one could still read the words: "They were lovely and exceeding pleasant in their lives, and in death they were not divided." It made Death seem nothing but a tender change. Somewhere outside Gloucester was a tablet in a little church in the memory of two brothers who had set sail from Gloucester in a fishing smack for Charleston, "and were never more heard of." Ah, but they were not forgotten. One felt everywhere in the little New England graveyards that here was the quiet New England peace. The outcast in life had peace here—no matter what there had been in life, once he was admitted to the friendly guild of the dead folk there were caring and protection for him, so that often on his grave flowers grew.

But the anonymous dead in the field by the olive trees—there was no care there.

In death they were outcasts. The man who had thrown himself down the Grand Corniche; the young wife who had jumped from the harbour pier into the Mediterranean that at night is purple as grapes; the old commander who had turned on the gas in his shabby room; the cynical plunger who had shot himself in the luxuriant gardens—all were picked up, as something unsightly in the gardens would be picked up, and hurried out of the way by the rapid officials. How quick, how deft, how secret these folk of the town were! A pass, like a stage magician's, and the body had gone. It was quietly, tidily packed away. No churchman of any creed stood proxy for the dead to cry that he knew his Redeemer lived, or that the Lord God was One. The gardeners dovetailed the sods of brilliant turf, saw that each blade of grass melted into perfect composition, and returned to tend the plumed palm trees and the flaunting bougainvillæa. *"En voilà un autre qui n'aura pas froid."* "There goes another who won't catch cold!"

It was not so much the shattering fact of the violent death that terrified Angela, but the sense of loneliness, as though these uncared-for people were dead in death, were wandering in the dark spaces between the stars, lost, utterly lost, as a child would be lost, mad with terror, in some vast black room.

She thought that she could never enter the Casino again, such an icy mantle had that acre of ground thrown over her heart, but when they had come again to the little town returning from Mentone, everything looked so quiet, so placid, so innocuous, that she wondered if she had been mistaken. She sat outside the Café de Paris sipping a coffee, while inside her mother danced to a galloping one-step of Lucien Boyer's. Near her an Anglican clergyman, in grey flannels and Roman collar, a bronze-faced athletic man, was sitting with a fox terrier on a leash. A group of French were excitedly discussing some important family event. Here hung a poster announcing the opening of the Russian bal-

let. Across the square a gigantic negro hall porter emerged from one of the hotels and blinked at the sun—he wore a maroon uniform, his chest was covered with war ribbons. A frail old lady passed in a two-horse barouche, a soft, sweet-faced old gentlewoman in black lace and a parasol. Below, the Mediterranean was still as a lake, as a blue lake in a painting. Above, the mountains relaxed their grimness and seemed to smile. And gay folk went in and out of the elaborate doorways of the Casino.

"I think I'll go in and look on for a minute," she decided.

She passed through the doors with her month's card, and stopped at the first table. The *chef de partie* looked at her and recognized her with a fatherly smile.

"Ah, Mademoiselle!" he greeted her.

Someone got up from a seat by the croupier. The chief held the chair for her. Unconsciously she sat down. It seemed foolish to do nothing. She shoved forward a hundred franc note to the changer. . . .

She laid a counter on the last six numbers at five to one; another on the second dozen at twos; two counters on the red at evens.

"Dix-sept, rouge, impair et manque!"

She had won on the red, and on the dozen. Lost on the number. An inspiration came to her that the winning number next time would be in the neighbourhood of seventeen. She let her stake and winnings on the dozen and on the red ride. She placed a counter on four numbers 19, 20, 22, 23,—an eight to one chance. She placed a counter on six, nineteen to twenty-four, a five to one shot. On a sudden hunch she placed one on twenty-two and twenty-three —seventeen to one.

"Vingt-deux, rouge, pair et passe!"

The croupier swiftly counted out her winnings, and shoved them toward her with his rake. The chief smiled, and *"bien joué"*—"well played," he uttered admiringly. She arranged the piles of counters in front of her.

"Mesdames et messieurs, faits vos jeux!"

She settled herself in her chair as a jockey settles himself in his saddle. Her eyes travelled coolly, concentratedly around the board. . . .

CHAPTER VI

SHE was sitting with Morrie Sullivan on the promenade at Var. The warm Midi noon was drawing in, and they had just come out of the water after a mile swim in the Mediterranean. Though it was April, and Easter would soon be here, yet Var was still crowded. From Paris came reports of torrential rain, and England's spring seemed as yet far-off, and in Ireland was the ominous quiet that presages the crackle of guns, so that the idle people preferred to rest on the azure Riviera, and while the idle moneyed folk still remained the Casino of Var would not close its doors. Spring was here at least. The almond trees broke into veils of white blossom; the forget-me-nots sprang out bluer than the blue sky; the orange and lemon trees gave promise of a teeming season. Up and down, under the waving palm trees, went the pretty Pari-

sian ladies, in their white summery clothes —their bluish-black hair, their liquid black eyes, their vermilion lips; went the young Frenchmen, attired in sport clothes of the most exaggerated cut; went Englishwomen, stolid, not a little arrogant, and Englishmen, tolerant, not a little soft after the Riviera; went Spaniards, who seemed always to sneer; went the ubiquitous Greeks.

She was leaning back against the seat, experiencing one of the few hours of peace she now had. It was so good to have Morrie with her—so good to have him swimming by her in his powerful, his vital way, instead of the young Frenchmen, who were always play-acting in the water, considering they had acquitted themselves like athletes of old Sparta when they had swum a half mile; so good to sit by his silence where the others would have been paying compliments, uttering insincerities because it was the thing to do. It was so good to have him, and it would be for such a little space!

She was half-dreaming, her eyes half-closed, so that she did not notice for an in-

stant the big, smart figure that had stopped before them.

"Good morning, Miss Turnbull."

"Oh!" She stood up. "Good morning, M'sieu' Dariano." She held her hand out, and the squat man took it, and, bending over it, brushed it with his grey moustache. Morrie was also on his feet. He grasped Morrie's hand.

"And you, Mr. Sullivan, how do you like Var?"

"It's a nice little place," Morrie answered. "I don't know what it's all about, but it's a nice little place."

"There is great charm in it," the Greek said. "Once one has been here, one always wishes to come back. The Phœnicians, the Romans loved it."

Sullivan looked at him keenly, studying his face, his clothes, and found himself qualifying the first impressions he had received the night he had met Dariano in the gambling rooms. The meticulously quiet clothes of the man, the fineness of linen and shoes—that hardly seemed the outfit of

the professional gambler, as he had imagined him. Nearly obese he might be, but somehow it was not the obesity of indulgence, it was how the man was made. Even the asthmatic wheeze was not repellent—he recognized that a misfortune. But the powerful face was not to be passed over, not in a thousand faces. The even olive tint of it, the clear, steady, powerful eye, the balanced jaw, the broad forehead. The fat body was an envelope of power. Here was a cool, steady, calculating thing that never lost control of itself, that knew what it wanted, that knew when to seize opportunity, that knew when to wait for it. One sensed, too, the tradition of mental craft that is the Greeks' heritage, as valour in battle is the Irish heritage, and unswerving, often stupid, honesty the English. If Dariano had been other than a gambler, Morrie would have liked him. Here, in fine, was a man.

"I don't see you gambling much, Mr. Sullivan."

"No," Morrie laughed, "I'm more on

swimming and that sort of thing than baccarat."

"That's good!" Dariano smiled. "I play it as a business, but people who play it as a game——" he shrugged his heavy shoulders. "I wish this dear young lady were as wise."

"I admire that bird," Morrie said when Dariano had gone on, "but he isn't human nature's daily food; what I mean is, Angie, I wish you'd cut that bird out. Just ease him off, will you?"

"I can't, Morrie."

"Why not?"

"You can't, you can't ease off a—well, a man who has asked you to marry him." Her face was downcast, a little flushed from embarrassment. She would not face Morrie's eyes. Sullivan sat up, taut, keen as a fighting dog.

"He asked you to marry him," he said slowly. "And what did you answer?" She was silent.

"Did you say: 'Yes,' Angela?"

"No, Morrie."

"Then you said: 'No,'?"

"I didn't, Morrie. I—I couldn't make up my mind."

"Do you care for this—this Greek man?"

"No, Morrie, I don't."

"Then why in hell——?"

"Don't, Morrie, please don't." She turned to him, and there was such pain in her eyes that it shocked him. "Don't ask me anything, please. Please, Morrie, don't."

"Easy, Angie, easy, girl," he told her. "We'll fix all this up in time. I won't ask you any more now. Whatever the trouble is we'll fix it up."

But she could only shake her head. There seemed to be on her a weight of hopelessness, heavy as the surly purple mountains that seemed always on the point of crushing the little, pretty, vicious town at their feet. . . .

CHAPTER VII

IT came to Angela with a cold, frostlike nip about her heart that her mother was coming to be irked by her, to dislike her. She tried to put the knowledge out of her head, but it remained. It would not go.

Mrs. Turnbull was one of that type of women who had accepted marriage because it was the natural thing to do at a particular age, just as, at an earlier age, one had one's dresses lengthened, and some years later one's hair put up. Had she not been so glitteringly pretty as a girl, it would have been a ten to one bet that she would never have found a husband. Her vivacity and prettiness covered up the lack of warmth in her, the inability to give. There was about her a rigidity like a steel bar's. Possibly her husband found this out in a short time, and it was on this account that he shifted his passion into business,

and later, when passion had worn out and there was need of tenderness, that what tenderness he had was put into the little house at New Canaan. He had never complained. He had just gone ahead with his bad bargain, as so many of his countrymen do. After all, he wasn't the only one. Angela was born because it was the thing for a young married woman to have a baby, who might be dressed prettily, and treated like a rather marvellous doll. In the years of her mother that Angela could remember well, she always thought of her as an extremely pretty woman, who was always going out to lunch and play bridge all afternoon at some friend's house, where a circle of her kind congregated, or having them to her own house in New Canaan; or going out to dances at local golf and yacht clubs; or driving around in the two-seater car. Angela had always felt she had resented the large young girl who had suddenly come into her life as her daughter, definitely hating her.

When Mr. Turnbull was alive she never

complained. What ambitions she had for a larger sphere of life she kept to herself, barring, of course, the gentle persuasion she exercised in extracting trips to Florida and the Carolinas, and her wish that he might bring her to the South of France. This cold, self-contained type of woman is invariably shrewd. It is never the type that throws a cap over the windmill. It is born with a cold, small philosophy that one had got to put up with a little inconvenience, such as a husband one doesn't care much for and rather despises, to achieve bread and circuses.

But now there was no husband, and now there was money. Now there was freedom. In this town of Var she could be one of the favoured. Here she played her good sound game of bridge—not with folk who had the same problems, the same outlook as she had, as was the case in America, but with, and on equal social terms with, people who would have awed her at home—a crack Australian tennis star; the wife of a British knight; a baroness; an Italian prince. And

she could dance, and carry on her innocent quasi-flirtations with boys or young men.

There is a strange romantic chord that binds the woman in the early forties to the boy in his twenties. For her there is the savouring the sweet ghost of her early years, which she was too impatient, too callow, to appreciate when she was only a girl. It was like the memory of the great dawns we have seen when we were young. And the boy at the threshold of life is more in love with life, with curiosity as to the adventure of living, than he is with womenkind. And here is one who has been through life, courtship and passion—a mother-sweetheart, as it were, a sweetheart who will understand from experience the doubts and problems that are in him, a mother whom his young manhood will not alienate, who will not always be seeing in him the fair-haired boy of five. It is pathetic and not unsweet, so long as it does not pass that dividing line which makes it an unnatural thing, and vile. . . .

Mrs. Turnbull was in the early forties,

but she might have been in the early thirties, such care had she taken of herself. She had also the *chic,* to use a much belaboured word, of the American woman, which surpasses the elegance of any middle-class woman in the world. She could have been very happy at Var but for one thing. How can one be happy fully, let one's self go, accept adulation, with the possibility every moment of a beautiful grown-up daughter coming in and making one uncomfortable. The adulation would turn to respectful admiration, and no amount of explanation that one had been married when "little better than a child" would explain away Angela's supple young womanhood. Also, she was afraid of looking ridiculous in Angela's eyes. Angela had such clear eyes, such seeing eyes. . . .

She had to admit, though, that Angela left her to herself. Angela had little taste for dancing, that is, dancing as the Riviera knew it, the tea dances which lasted from three in the afternoon until dressing-time for dinner, and the dinner dances which

lasted from eight in the evening until two in the morning, an orgy of St. Vitus. No, Angela was content to spend the evening and part of the afternoon in the gambling rooms. And if that amused Angela—— And Angela was level-headed. Took after her father there! said Mrs. Turnbull to herself. . . .

For Angela the opening of the Var Casino came as a relief, for now it was becoming too cold to swim, and the winter mistral was setting in, blowing a cold, spraying wind landward that made the promenade along the pier not as pleasant as all the accounts of the Riviera had foretold. The further Alps began to wear white scarves of snow. The Mediterranean changed from its vivid blue to a grey, snarling sea. Often it rained dreadfully, appalling columns of rain, hour in, hour out, so that the only refuge were in the *thés dansant,* where the young girls danced with men who might have been their grandfathers, ancient colonels and general officers, who had finished their lives' work and

were now resting a little before assaulting the battlements of Death; superannuated officers from India and Rhodesia and other quarters of the infidels, whose shattered health would not permit them to face the rigours of a Northern winter. And young men with too much money and no work to do, who were forever dancing with senior women—the *jeune fille* being too unsophisticated for them. Old men dancing with young girls, and young men dancing with women at least a decade older than they—the universeness of this troubled Angela's clean, natural quality. No, she would not go in.

Another section began filling the little town, the gamblers. Deauville and Biarritz and Le Touquet were closed, and now they descended on Var. All of them, men and women, had keen fighting faces, some hard, some only drawn a little, but their features had the one quality visible in all immobility, and their eyes were wary. To these people roulette was a child's game, not much above the standard of the ridic-

ulous *"boule"* that was played for the benefit of small French shopkeepers, at a franc stake, and with a soft rubber ball! They were there for the real baccarat battles, in the quiet millionaires' town, in the pretty casino into which every Tom, Dick and Harry could not gain entrance, as they could at Monte Carlo. . . .

The word "baccarat" thrilled Angela. It had a magical, somehow kabalistic sound, and in spite of the stories she had heard of great fortunes lost or made in a night, she could hardly credit that it was a vicious gambling affair, "for," she argued, "they don't allow roulette in France, and I know that is a gambling game, so if the Government allows baccarat it can't be so bad, can it?" Those to whom she spoke of the matter only smiled. Everybody at Var admitted the intense viciousness of Monte Carlo, exaggerated, if anything, the number of tragedies there. Were there ever any suicides at Var? The French, the hotel porter, the proprietor, they regarded her with the horror they

would have naturally felt had she cried "Down with the Republic!" A suicide at Var? A tragedy of any kind. *"Quelle comédie!"*

Her first view of the baccarat rooms at Var gave her a sense of joyousness. Everything was so different from Monte Carlo. Everything in the great Casino there was so formal. The Casino itself, the attendants, the *chefs de partie,* the croupiers—all had the air of saying: "Well, if you want gambling, if you must have gambling, here it is for you—a straight game and no favour. Gamble or not, it doesn't matter to us." Angela often thought that entering Monte's Casino must be like the entering into a ring of the great prize-fights she had read about. A quick order, and all your friends and seconds left you, alone in the roped enclosure with your opponent, alone but for the aloof, almost ghastly, referee, none to help, none to advise you. A stark fight against fortune—such was Monte. But at Var everyone was smiling—the attendants at the door, the croupiers inside,

the waiters, the footmen in plush and gold braid. It seemed like a jolly country club, or yacht club, raised to an apogee of luxury. One could not help smiling, too. Overhead lights poured like sunshine over the luxurious chairs and lounges, and over the little green tables where, in formal evening costume, the players sat. It was like a scene on a stage or on a cinematograph screen. And suddenly a croupier's voice called crisply.

"*Neuf à la banque;* the bank has a nine!"

Then Angela knew they were gambling.

She drew near one of the tables and looked on. She had a vague idea of the game from hearing about it. Nine was the highest point. Anything over nine didn't count. Court cards and tens counted nothing. Nine and eight were naturals—like seven and eleven in dicing games. She drew nearer to watch and see the practice. There, about an oblong table, covered with green cloth as a card table is covered, nine players sat, each with his number in

painted yellow before him on the baize. On one side sat the croupier, with a trowel-shaped board in his hand, a sort of trowel with an immense blade, and a small handle. With this he reached to each part of the table, collecting or paying out debts in counters or hundred-franc notes. Before one man was a little box, shaped like a sluice, or a grain shovel. At one end was a handle, at the other was a metal clip. From the clip end he was dealing out cards. Five red counters, five louis, a hundred francs were before the croupier on the table.

"*Une banque de cinq louis!* A bank of a hundred francs," the croupier called.

A keen-eyed Frenchman with a black spade beard two seats away called: "Banco!"

The dealer clicked a card out and shoved it, face downward, toward the Frenchman; clicked out one for himself: another for the Frenchman; another to himself. The dealer sat back and lit a cigarette. The croupier looked on keenly. The Frenchman

picked up his cards and glanced at them; put them down again.

"Carte!" he snapped. "I'll draw a card.

The dealer took up his hand and looked at it—a three of clubs and a five of hearts. He threw it down.

"Huit à la banque! The bank has eight."

The croupier reached over for the Frenchman's cards and bank-note with his shovel. He slipped the used cards down a slot. He changed a louis counter into four or five francs each. He slid two five-franc counters down the Casino's slot. He leaned back.

"A bank of nine and a half louis!"

"But doesn't the other man get his card?" Angela asked a fellow-guest at the hotel.

"Nobody gets a card if the banker or the punter has an eight or a nine. That's a natural, see? *Fini!* All over."

"A bank of nine and a half louis," the croupier repeated. *"Qui fait le banco?* Who goes banco?"

A dark, pretty Latin woman, smoking a cigarette in a turquoise holder, nodded. The dealer looked up.

"Banco?" She nodded again.

He dealt the cards as he had done the first time; one to her, one to himself; one to her, one to himself. She looked at her cards.

"Carte!" she called. She had the soft, quiet intonation of a gentlewoman. The dealer turned over his cards. He had an ace and a five—six.

He dealt out another card, looked at it, and passed it across the table—a queen. He shoved his own cards forward and tapped with his hand. He stood on his six. The dark lady bowed and laid down her hand: a ten, a queen, a four—four. She had lost. The croupier gathered the stakes and the cards, deducted the casino's five per cent.

"Eighteen and a quarter louis! Who goes banco?"

"Banco!" A lethargic Russian at the end of the table called. His voice boomed

like a menace. He wore the button of some Czarist order in his dinner jacket. He was a fat truculent man. The dealer hesitated a moment.

"What's he waiting for?" Angela asked.

"He's not sure whether he's going to give it or not," the hotel friend told her. "A bank usually goes down on the third shot. If it passes the third shot it may run eight more times."

The dealer decided to go ahead. He dealt the cards. The Russian looked at his hand. *"Non!"* he called. He was standing pat.

The dealer looked at his cards. A king and a four! He drew a card for himself—a six. King, nothing! Four and six, ten, nothing.

"Baccarat!" called the croupier. "No good!" The Russian threw down a queen and a seven, seven. The croupier passed him the eighteen and a half louis, nearly four hundred francs. The dealer shoved the box to the man nearest him on his right hand side. Three louis were put in.

"A bank of three louis!"

"It's such a silly game," Angela criticised. "There's nothing to it."

The shoe, as the *argot* for the baccarat box goes, had passed around the table three times, without a bank winning more than twice. A slim young Frenchman sitting on the left hand side of the lethargic Russian rose in irritation. His seat was taken by a small, keen-eyed woman of fifty, with a haughty fighting face. Her hair was black, her features sharp and regular, but her eyes were extraordinary. All the life in her centred in the black eyes. They were challenging, malevolent eyes. At times the eyelids were almost shut, but one got the sense of fearful power all the same, as of some leopard or tiger hiding in a thicket. Her hands glittered with diamonds, but the glitter of her eyes was keener, colder, than the glitter of the stones. The croupier bowed to her. The table looked at her with interest, some with awe.

"That's Mme. Pierre Ralli," someone explained to Angela. "Don't you remem-

ber? Pierre Ralli, the Emperor of the Kameroons?"

And then Angela recalled to mind the life of the mad French millionaire, who had set out to find an Empire in Africa for himself—one of those queer, baroque figures who tread for a week, for a month, through the journalistic history of Europe.

"Watch!"

The shoe, travelling from left to right, was but two places from the mad Emperor's wife. The bank had gone twice. It was now up against the critical third coup.

"Banco!" roared the heavy Russian on Mme. Ralli's right. The cards were dealt. The Russian's two were being handed to him on the croupier's shovel. Mme. Ralli put out her hand and tapped the table.

"Banco prime!" she said. The cards were given to her.

"How come?" Angela asked.

"The one nearest the dealer on the right hand side has always prior claim to banco."

The Ralli woman threw down a natural eight—two fours. The bank had nothing.

The stakes were handed to her. The bull-like Russian glared at her, breathing heavily through his nostrils. She bancoed the player on her left and won. The box came to her. She put up three counters of a hundred francs each.

"A bank of fifteen louis!" called the croupier.

"Banco!" the big Russian snarled.

She dealt the cards calmly, two to him and two to her. The Russian called for a card. She turned her own hand. A two and a five—seven. She gave him an ace. A three, a queen and an ace. She had won. The bank doubled.

"Banco," again called the Russian.

She had lit a cigarette, and was smoking it with one hand. With the jewelled fore-finger of her right hand she dealt again. The Russian stood on his cards. She turned up two queens. Nothing. She drew a seven. The Russian flung his hand down, a jack and a six. The stakes had quadrupled.

"Banco toujours!" The Russian glared. "Banco again!" He would catch her on the

fatal third turn. She dealt the cards. He threw down his hand, his eyes popping with triumph.

"Huit," he called, "eight!"

She turned one card. It was a king, nothing. She turned the other; held it in her fingers a second. Showed it to him.

"Et neuf!" she smiled. "And nine!"

"Une banque de cent quinze louis. A bank of one hundred and fifteen louis. A bank of two thousand three hundred francs! *Qui fait le banco? Qui dit banco?* Who goes banco?"

People had come from all parts of the room to see Mme. Ralli play. The rumour had gone out that her bank was running. Folk crowded around the table looking. Angela felt her heart pounding with the strain. The counters and hundred-franc notes were piled carelessly on the table in front of the croupier.

"If nobody goes banco lay your bets."

The players at the table and the folk standing behind pushed notes and counters forward on the line, betting evens that the

bank would go down, everything from hundred-franc notes to modest five-franc counters.

"Encore cinquante louis! Still a thousand francs to make up."

"Je complète!" A young American in the standing ring called. "I'll make up the difference." Now there was acute tension. Everybody had a little stake on. Angela had put a fifty-franc note on the table. The young American took the cards for the table. Ralli looked at him keenly. He hesitated a second.

"Carte," he called shakily. She knew what he had. He had a five. An even chance. But he was trying to better his hand. She turned up her own cards. A ten and a four, four. She dealt a card to him, a six. One could feel the electric tension of the table. She looked up dreamily and put her hand on the cards.

"Je reste!" she said. "I stand on four."

The punters gave a sigh of disgust. The young American had a two, a three and a six, eleven, just one. The stakes were swept

into the big pile. Again the croupier called.

"A bank of four thousand five hundred!"

"Banco!"

A young Persian, in the dinner jacket of the West and the turban of the East, called the bank. He was slight and olive-tinted. He was one of the best polo players in the world.

"Sept cartes, ou le coup n'y est pas!" the croupier warned as she dealt. "Unless there are seven cards the coup is annulled."

She dealt two cards to the Persian, two to herself. The Persian smiled and threw down his hand. A ten and a nine, nine! Ralli turned her's, two queens, nothing. She flicked out the other cards in the box. There were only two.

"Le coup est nul!" the croupier called. "No deal!"

"La main passe!" smiled Ralli sweetly. "I pass the bank." In four throws she had run her bank from three hundred to forty-five hundred francs. The table broke up

while the six packs of cards were being reshuffled. . . .

During the interval a player took the opportunity of dropping out—he had no wish to stay at a table dominated by the luck of the mad Emperor's wife. Unconsciously, as she might have done at the roulette tables of Monte Carlo, Angela slipped into his seat. The shoe passed from hand to hand, the bank going down each time until it came to her. She had a queer thrill in her heart as the player on her left hand side passed her the wooden box. She put up sixty francs on the table.

"A bank of three louis!"

Angela looked tentatively round the table. She was afraid of Ralli. If Ralli bancoed her she felt her bank would go down. But Ralli was smiling and pushing forward three louis.

"Madame Ralli asks," the inspector said in English, "if she can be associated in your bank—if she can double the stake."

"Of course," Angela said.

"A bank of six louis," the croupier

called. "A bank of one hundred and twenty francs. *Qui fait le banco!* Who goes banco?"

The player on Angela's right tapped the table. He was a mild, bald man, with tortoise-rimmed glasses. The inspector and the croupier hovered protectingly around Angela. "One for him; one for you. Now, another for him; another for you. *Attendez!* Don't look at your cards!"

"Card," asked the mild man.

"No, don't give it yet. Turn over your cards. *Neuf!* Nine!"

She looked at the ten and nine she had before her. She had won first shot. The croupier deducted the percentage; swept the stakes into the middle of the table.

"A bank of eleven and a half louis."

The young Persian polo-player had strolled back to the table. "Banco!" he called.

"Banco suivi!" rapped the mild man. "I follow my first bet."

She dealt again. Again the mild man asked for a card. She turned hers over.

"Huit à la banque!" the croupier chanted before she had counted them herself. "The bank has eight!" She was conscious of Mme. Ralli's smile. Someone behind her said: "Now you see the damned thing will go on forever. Beginner's luck!"

"A bank of twenty-two louis!"

"Banco!" The young Persian smiled, and searched into his pockets for notes.

She was on the point of dealing when she knew that this time the bank would go down. She sensed that for her there was no power in the box. The box felt negative. She remembered Ralli's phrase and shook her head.

"La main passe!" she decided.

She was conscious of the faint contempt in her partner's eyes. She was conscious of the smiles about the table. The young American lady had no courage. The croupier was silent as he divided the winnings. The mild man on her right was triumphant as he put up the twenty-two louis and took over the bank.

"A bank of twenty-two louis!" called

the croupier. But none was keen on going banco. The young American's bank, who had never played before, and had passed it. It would go on for three or four more times, at least; possibly for ten.

"Who goes banco?" asked the croupier.

Angela was as certain that the bank would go down as she was of sitting at the table. There was nothing in her mind more certain than this: the bank will go down. But it was nearly five hundred francs—between thirty and thirty-five dollars. She had never risked so much on a single coup at Monte.

"If nobody goes banco——"began the croupier's formula.

"Banco!" Angela called.

The table smiled. No, the young American lady was not a coward—she was worse, she was a damned fool. First of all, nobody bancoed their own bank. It was the worst luck in the world. Secondly, any fool could see that the bank was going to run. To pass a bank was foolish, but to banco it was mania. The mild man looked at Angela

smilingly, and past his smile Angela noticed something hard as a stone wall. She knew suddenly that in all the smiles at the table was hardness, hardness as of stone walls or steel.

"Banco?" smiled the mild man.

"Banco," Angela repeated.

He clicked the cards out. Angela picked hers up. For an instant she could not count them, the queer French cards without numbers in the corner. But the croupier was looking on.

"A bas les cartes!" he directed. "Throw them down. *Neuf à la ponte!"* "The punter has nine," he intoned. He gathered the bank in his long ashen shovel and presented it to Angela. *"C'est le coup du roi,* the King's Trick," he smiled, showing his fine Latin teeth from ear to ear. There was a buzz of appreciation around the table, *le coup du roi,* to run your bank successfully a couple of times, banco it and win again. Ah, it was seldom it happened. Ah, the young American lady was not such a fool as she looked. *"Le hunch Américain!"*

they explained it to each other. The mild man got up and walked away, remarking cryptically that "once a sucker, always a sucker!" Angela arranged the neat pile of winnings before her. Nearly seven hundred francs, then she remembered the poker slang, fifty solid iron men!

CHAPTER VIII

THE Riviera days slid one into another with the unnoticeable perfection of fine machinery. Great drifts of snow lay like clouds on the battlemented Alps in the morning and by mid-day they had gone, and the next morning they were again there. And now for a day the Mediterranean would be sleek as a cat, and the next day it would be grey, angry, its hackles rising like a fighting cock's; under the assault of the mistral. Came Christmas under bright sunshine—a weird, forlornish day; one missed the snow, and the Christmas trees in the hotel drawing-rooms looked like a joke in bad taste. And New Year's Eve was but an excuse for fancy dress balls and the opening of champagne bottles. Without there was no particular cold; the palm trees murmured; the saffron, somehow sad, moon

climbed slowly out of the East. Within the band moaned the Blue Danube Blues, and a myriad of couples strutted, posed, gyrated, as though the coming year had nothing in her womb of war or peace, of health or pestilence. Only the hotel employees were keen, calculating their tips of the morrow.

Var was coming into its famous season. Grand dukes of Austria, of Hungary, of Russia, swarmed, half proud, half ashamed of their new poverty, carrying about with them an air of withered royalty, that had the pathetic, rather disgusting look of withered flowers. Stripped of their imperial trappings, they seemed grotesquely, obscenely naked. They were deferential to the newly-rich, the war profiteers, who, strange to say, were mainly English, dwellers in India who had become rich in cotton, and folks from the Satanic fogs of Birmingham and Liverpool and Manchester. Here were a host of ex-kings, ex-princes, minor royalties of whom one never heard before, to be

found in corners of the Almanach de Gotha. Some of these, a few, weren't bad lads at all, they paid for their round of drinks like Anglo-Saxons. And some were quite proud—a few—refusing tips, disguised as loans, from the *shiebers* in advance payment for invitations to parties. Hither came Irish peers, who had left home under a cloud because they had spoken disrespectfully of a new army whose general officers had received their ranks in some manure-heap ambush, and who were always stating: "In my opinion, the trouble with Ireland is this——" as if anybody gave a damn any more! Hither came Scottish peers pondering over the Euclidean problem: if a rich man in Great Britain becomes a peer, would not the obverse hold true, would it no' be possible for a peer o' His Majesty's realm tae become a weel-off mon? Here were the younger English peers, eager to embrace the tenets of labour, giving ghostly characters to the new landed gentry of England, of the sort of people who know

Brother Reynard the Fox. The younger peers will tell of the devious Mephistophelian ways in which these folk have made their money; they will pass lightly over the fact that these people eat with their knives; they will shrug their shoulders in a broad-minded way, remembering that the ancestors of this quaint folk were not bound in holy wedlock. And then they tell you the worst.

"Of course you won't believe it, my dear boy. You'll think it's just bitterness on my part. But—my boy, I assure you, all this new huntin' crowd—they all trample hounds!" God's night-shirt! Can such things be?

Hither comes M. Pommet, the world's greatest dress designer and arbiter of the elegancies since Petronius, a burly man in a double-breasted white serge suit, and a peach-coloured artist's tie beneath his unshaven chin. Once a year M. Pommet goes to Var to decide whether women are to be fat or slender this year, whether they shall show their knees or only their

heels, and what M. Pommet decides, lo! they are and do. And behind M. Pommet, at a respectful distance, walk three handmaidens, built and dressed as M. Pommet decides all womenkind shall be dressed this year or forever hold their peace. And these three handmaidens are undoubtedly destined for the Chief Saint in God's Paradise, such beauty have they. And hither, also, come the women who have arisen to prominence during the year —as the lady who shot her Abyssinian husband in a hotel sitting-room; as the lady who was sued for breach of promise by a Spanish grandee; as the lady who was slapped in the face by an Austrian grand duke at the Deauville casino for mentioning he was fat. Gentlewomen all!

Hither come the tennis players, the champion of England, the champion of France, the champion of Greece, the champion of Czecho-Slovakia, the champion of Hibernoslovakia. Now there are nought but tournaments, and you put your racket in its press for good and look

on. Or you go out to play golf, and you wait until the Kezar of all the Russias has driven off, and the Hetman of all the Cossacks has driven off, and the Count of all the Parises has driven off, and the Rato of all the Samoas has driven off, and then you go off yourself, wedged in between a procession of strange foreigners who play golf in white linen spats and fur gloves, and whose favourite club is *"le neebaleek."* And when you come to the third hole, which is by the waters of Var, you sit down, yea, you weep, when you remember Gleneagles. And you wrap the shaft of your driver around the willows in the midst thereof. And you go down to the Casino, where you can have your humanity in small doses, and you play baccarat.

For such is Var, which is the most expensive town in the world. Such, in a trifle more vulgar way, is Nice. Such, each after its kind, is every town on the Riviera. One wonders at the smiling, fat, gay Provençal. But why should he not be smiling, fat

and gay, subsisting as he does, according to my Uncle Valentine—that ruffianly wise old gentleman—on "sunshine and suckers"? To paraphrase the sailorman's cynical remark: "Who wouldn't sell his little farm and go to Var?"

CHAPTER IX

ANGELA'S habit of life became this: To rise in the morning and go for a stroll along the promenade, stopping for a coffee and brioche around eleven at the café—if there were no tennis tournament on. After lunch she would play tennis, or go to the golf links. Around half past four the violet dusk of the Midi would descend, and then after tea would come the rush to the Casino. There would be play for an hour and a half. Then dinner, perhaps a dance or two, and back to the Casino until twelve or half past. And then to bed.

She came to know the habitués of the Casino one by one—the great plungers, the small, shrewd gamblers. There were nineteen tables in all, and occasionally, after a run of luck, she would leave the table where a sixty-franc bank was the minimum to put up, for a larger one. And

now and then a big plunger would leave the table of a minimum of fifteen hundred francs for a small table: to run off his bad luck where the stakes were, for him, infinitesimal. So Angela came to know them all. Here was a lumber king, who had made a king's fortune in British Columbia, losing it steadily at the tables. Here was an ex-king, one of the first exes, chubby and jolly as a school boy, playing a game as keen as any professional's. Here were cocottes from Paris, leaders of their world, Billie Quelquechose and Peggee Une Telle, whose behaviour was as prim as the most excellent Mrs. Grundy could desire, and the only sign of whose profession, or lack of one, visible, was the smart quality of their clothes and the sleek, well-groomed look of them. There they sat beside some frumpy archduchess, exchanging courtly remarks with her. Here sat one of a family, claimants of the Spanish throne. Beside him was an international crook, resting. One came to know both of them, and the manners of the great bank robber were

every whit as chivalrous as those of "Monseigneur." A great American banker sat opposite an Indian rajah, and they smiled sympathetically at each other when they lost. And when they passed Angela, the banker's "keeping up the good work, kid?" and the rajah's *"Toujours la veine?* Still in luck?" had a camaraderie about them that was very heartening. And down the room the Grand Duke Dmitri was howling in high-piping Muscovite that the wife of some local tradesman had done him in the eye for ten francs, having pushed her chip over the line when his bank had gone down.

Angela picked up the strategy of the game quickly enough. To punt against the bank's third coup, against its fifth coup; to banco only once, not to follow and follow, doubling each time; she learned by heart the mathematical probabilities of the draw, such as giving a nine, when a card was called for, one stood on four, giving a six, one always drew, even though having a six. She learnt the superstitions of the

game, such as, the bank having naturals, eights or nines on the first and second coup, to pass it then, for it invariably took a header on the third. She became superstitious about seats at the table, now pinning her faith to seat three or seat five, now to seat nine. Occasionally taking number one. Certain tables and certain croupiers were lucky for her. She got to know the runs of luck of the players. When a man was in luck not to punt against him. It was quite a while before she could bring herself to the cruel custom of the chemin-de-fer game, to go after a man when he was obviously out of luck. She learned it, in the end, by being cruelly mauled by everyone, her own luck being out. . . .

Her mother, all through their first winter at Var, left her very much to herself. Her mother was changing, had changed so much, in fact, that her old friends in New Canaan would not have known her, or, recognizing her, would certainly have thought her mad. She had joined the *Cercle Agricole* at Var, which is exclusively the

home of bridge, and is affected by Russians, French and English. And in that atmosphere of decaying nobility, she had learned parlour tricks that would have amazed her New England society. Everything American now seemed to her vulgar, and to Angela's surprise she found her mother now reading the London *Times*, under the impression that it was the only newspaper in the world a gentlewoman could be found reading. Thus Mrs. Turnbull. Mrs. Turnbull's maiden name had been Howard, Jessica Howard, and, finding out now that it was the family name of the Dukes of Norfolk, she straightway leaped to the conclusion that her family was an off-shoot of the Arundel Howards, who had emigrated to America in the colonizing days of Maryland. She was confirmed in this opinion by a heraldic expert in London, who furnished her with a complete genealogy for thirty-three guineas, or one hundred and fifty dollars. She thus became entitled to a crest on her notepaper, and the belief that she was descended from

a cadet branch of the great English ducal family. The change of her prename from Jessica to Jasmine was not of logic, but inspirational. In her second year of the Riviera she had become Madame Jasmine Howard-Turnbull. And so is the Riviera, that she was accepted as such, for it is only in strange, uncivilized countries like America and Ireland that people are prevented from going mad in their own particular way.

What her mother did in this particular line Angela did not mind. So long as she was allowed to be Angela Turnbull, her mother might claim to be queen of all the Shebas. After all, her mother's affectations of nobility were just innocently silly compared to what the mothers of other girls did, as, for instance, Jane Robinson's mother, Lady Mary Robinson, who knew more about cheating at bridge than the cleverest boat crook; than the Baroness de Damery, who breakfasted off hot coffee and morphine; than the Honourable Mrs. Trelawny-Hocking, who was an *"alcool-*

ique terrible," a most notable souse, in the vulgate. But what did worry Angela a little was the way her mother was wasting money. She decided one day to have a talk with her about it.

"Mother darling," she told her, "have you any idea how much money you're spending?"

"Oh, Angela," Mrs. Turnbull looked worried, "I know it's terrible, but money goes so here. And dresses and everything are so dear. But we'll have a cheap summer."

"I know, my dear," Angela went ahead, "but how are you now?"

"I don't quite know, Angela."

"Listen, Mother," Angela insisted, "I picked up your cheque book in mistake for my own, and, my dear, a lot of the stubs are unfilled. Now, that's silly."

"I know, Angela, but it's all such a bother."

"Now listen, honey," Angela pleaded, "you let me take care of the money. I'm pretty level-headed. I'm like daddy in that.

You let me do the disbursing. I'll keep an eye on everything."

"Oh, would you, darling?" Mrs Turnbull asked dramatically. "I'm such a fool about money." Angela could not but allow herself a mental smile. Mrs. Turnbull had not been such a fool about it in America when her father was alive. "Take it all over. Write and sign the cheques. But don't be stingy about it, Angie. Don't stint me."

Angela was glad of the job. It gave her something to do. She was glad to see they hadn't spent as much as she had thought. The hundred thousand dollars had been odd, and the odd part of it had been on the right side. Most of the money was invested in six per cent. first mortgages. There was nothing to worry about. She had a power of attorney made out to her, and wrote the bank at home that in the future she would take care of the family finances. Everywhere now Mrs. Turnbull spoke of her treasurer and secretary, saying it was so nice to have a daughter who could fill the

position, and not to be compelled to employ some untrustworthy stranger. To have a secretary-bursar on the Riviera raises you to dizzy heights, far surpassing ordinary titled people. Among the sort of people who came to the Riviera for a week, Mrs. Turnbull always referred to Angela as her strict treasurer and secretary, so that they went away to foreign parts not knowing the beautiful blonde girl was the daughter of the scion of the Norfolks. Indeed, many young men spoke of her as Mrs. Howard-Turnbull's pretty secretary, and many elderly women wondered if the American millionairess weren't a fool to employ in a fiduciary capacity—such a succulent phrase!—a young woman who was manifestly a victim of the baccarat fever!

Such a dear, trusting woman! So unworldly!

CHAPTER X

THEN, all of a sudden, Spring burst. First, one noticed the country powdered with gold. Gold floated in billowy, frothy clouds until the hills from Cannes to La Napoule were the home of glory. The mimosa had flowered. And underfoot the wild anemone thrust up its silent, scarlet head, and under the budding oaks and chestnuts and cork trees of the Esterel, the wild hyacinth put forth its miracle of blue. In the formal gardens of the great hotels the gardeners were setting out the plants they had hoarded through the winter—mignonette and gardenia. From their hiding places the small lizards came out, cautious as kittens, to steal warmth from the Midi sun. And an almond tree broke into blossom as into song. . . .

The Casino these evenings of Spring was more crowded than ever. From

Algeria and Egypt the tourists were coming north to escape the increasing African heat, and from the north folk were swarming, sick of winter, and eager to get a foretaste of the blossoming year. English, Irish and Scottish, they came. Came the Americans. Came the serried German phalanx, disguised as Swiss, as Scandinavians, as Finns, as Letts, as Esquimaux, as whatnot—good old *Gott mit uns* though, no matter what the monaker or make-up. There were not enough tables, not enough seats to go around. No longer did the play stop at two of the morning, it went on until six, until seven, until eight. The heavy curtains masked the sun rising, rising behind Marseilles in the morning, as it had masked it setting behind the Esterel in the afternoon. The tired players went out in evening dress to find the town going quietly about its routine of the day, paying no attention to them. . . . There was something fearfully disreputable about this rout of players, haggard, yawning, in unseemly clothes, coming out into the Midi morning.

It was like a blasphemy against our Lord the Sun.

One night Angela had stayed until after twelve in the rooms. Her luck had been out, and she had been waiting for the tide to turn, foolishly as she herself knew. At last she rose in disgust, out seven hundred francs, and as she was going out she noticed a strange tension in the room. The knee-breeched footmen were getting a large table out, a larger table than any she had yet seen used. There were sixteen places to it. On each side were places marked one to seven. In the middle were two places—one an ordinary unmarked place, the other the indented place of the croupier. Also, around this table were being erected small wooden posts connected by silken ropes. The attendants looked more keen than she had ever seen them before. She asked a Casino acquaintance, le Baron de Saint Lue, what was happening.

"*C'est le grand jeu de baccarat,* Mademoiselle Thournbulle—the big game. The Darianos' game."

She looked on fascinated. She had noticed that, for some particular reason, the big players were not in evidence that night. At the chemin-de-fer tables the minor gamblers had all their own way. Now she saw them drifting in one by one. A footman brought up a small "shoe," a beautiful mahogany shoe inlaid with gold. He put it reverently on the table. A croupier sat down in the croupier's chair. Angela noticed that it was the chief croupier of the Casino, a Norman, with the hooded eyes of a hawk, and a brain like a calculating machine. The card official brought two packs of cards.

"*Mesdames, messieurs, prenez vos places.* Take your places; the game is about to begin."

Angela recognized most of the people who sat down at the big table. There was Mr. M., one of the few remaining European royalties; there was Traill, the American steel man; there, red-faced and beefy, was Sir John Gadd, the Yorkshire cotton magnate; next him was the Duchess

of Armagh, a wiry hunting woman, with snapping black eyes. Here was the young Italian husband of an elderly English countess, monocle in eye and bangle on wrist. Here was a squat, bearded figure, supposed to be a Swiss merchant, but in reality one of the heads of a great German ship-building firm. And scattered here and there were calm, granite-faced men, representatives of big, gambling syndicates, chosen for their nerve, luck and skill. A group of men came down the room. One was carrying a waste-paper basket. Beside him were two men, burying their hands in their side pockets, evidently armed. Behind them walked a moustached Frenchman, carrying a book, the tax inspector for the Government. Then were three men, a young olive-coloured man of thirty or thereabouts, dressed in a correctness of dinner jacket that spoke of London tailoring. He seemed a careless, silent sort of man. Beside him was a tall, thin, bearded man, with a worried expression about his brown eyes. The third figure was corpulent,

dressed in a dinner jacket that was just a dinner jacket and of no particular cut. He smoked a heavy Egyptian cigarette and wheezed a little as he walked. The eyes of all three were expressionless, but the younger man's face gave an impression of carelessness, the bearded man's an expression of worry, the heavy man's showed power. . . .

The man with the waste-paper basket laid it on the table. It was half full of pink bundles, small, oblong, each bound with an elastic band. He began to take them out one by one and range them. Angela recognized what they were: they were folded thousand-franc notes, in bundles of ten. A hundred of them; a hundred and fifty—a million and a half francs, over sixty thousand dollars! Was there so much money as that in the world? Angela asked. And they carried it in a waste-paper basket.

The cards were broken and shown about the table. The beefy baronet nodded gruffly; the Italian prince regarded them through his monocle as though they were

quaint things he had never seen before; the Irish duchess took them and looked at their backs—her baccarat manners were atrocious. . . . In front of everyone playing at the table was a fat pile of thousand-franc notes. The cards were shuffled, cut, and placed in the little box. The young, careless man sat down in the vacant seat opposite the croupier. He drew the shoe toward him.

"That is Archimède Dariano," the baron de Saint Lue told Angela. "The one with the beard is George, the big one is Solon. Archimède is unlucky; Solon, he always wins."

From all parts of the rooms the chemin-de-fer players crowded about the ropes. They were all silent. The croupier leaned forward for an instant toward the Greek banker, and whispered. He straightened up and called.

"The minimum punt will be a thousand francs." He looked toward Dariano again. "There is no maximum limit."

"*Aux jeux!* Game."

Then every player at the table pushed his or her stake on the board. Here and there were single thousands, but twos and threes and a five or so were the usual stakes, and there was one bundle of ten.

The young Greek flicked a card out to the right, a card out to the left, a card for himself; another card for the right, another card for the left, another to himself. The first player on the right picked up the cards.

"Carte!" he asked.

"Carte à droite!" the croupier called. "A card for the right hand half!"

The player on the left laid down his hand, a two and a six, eight.

"Huit à gauche!"

Dariano turned over his cards. A five and a ten. Five. He flicked out a court card and passed it to the right.

"Cinque à la banque! The bank has five. The right?"

"Three!"

The croupier swooped on the right side like a falcon. He gathered in the stakes

with his swift ashen blade. He counted with incredible swiftness, verified bundles. The slim notes rustled like silk under his fingers. He paid out the stakes to the left hand side. He counted what remained. He made a bundle of ten thousand francs, and snapped home an elastic band. He threw the bundle and some odd thousands toward the immense pile of the bank.

"Messieurs, mesdames, faites vos jeux!"

Again the silent thrusting forward of bank-notes. The flick of cards. Again the left won, the right lost. All through the play was a silence that could be felt. Then would come a breathing, and one could feel the relaxation of the folk about one. It was like a giant holding his breath under water and then letting go when he came to the surface.

The right hand half plunged on the third coup, the left played carefully.

"Carte!" asked the first half.

"Carte!" echoed the second.

The youngest Dariano turned his hand over.

"Neuf à la banque!" the croupier called. "The bank's nine wins." The Greek had won from both sides.

And now a sort of fever swept over the observers. On every side people were taking out thousand franc notes and passing them to the players to put on for them. It seemed as if they could no longer keep out of the battle. Before she actually knew what she was doing Angela had her thousand note out with the others, and was plucking the baron by the sleeve. "Please, baron, reach over——"

"But certainly!"

Only when it was too late she found she had put up two bills instead of one. Her heart almost stopped beating. Ah, there! she'd won! The crowd swayed as each tried to get their winnings or turned away in disgust. Someone stood on a woman's train as she moved and it began to crack.

"M. le baron!" Angela pleaded. But M. le baron was looking after his own affair. Again the cards were dealt. Again she

won. Her athletic forearm and shoulder got her through. "Will you please hand me that eight thousand francs?" she asked the croupier. He looked at her and smiled. He gave them to her. She had won six mille! Between four and five hundred dollars.

There was an instant's pause. The Swiss merchant with the stubby German beard had suddenly produced a bundle from his pocket, five of the pink elastic-banded sheaves. He threw it on the table. Fifty thousand francs. Dariano hardly looked at it. There was a reddish light in the punter's eye as if he were out for fight. Dariano dealt.

"Gard, blease."

Dariano showed his eight.

The German ship director called the Casino inspector. There was a moment's whispering. The inspector came from the cashier's desk with a great bundle of notes. The bearded man slung ten of them on the table, a hundred thousand francs. Hardly any other money was put up. Dariano dealt.

"Gard, blease!"

Dariano turned over his own; two threes, or six. He dealt an eight to the punter. Tapped the six.

The heavy man turned livid. He put down his hand, a ten, a two, the drawn eight. Twenty. Baccarat! His eyes blazed. His beard twitched.

And then, among the spectators, a Frenchman laughed. He had one arm. Under that was a crutch. He had one leg. His laugh was very spontaneous, very boyish, but his hair was white. For some reason or other, possibly on account of his leg and arm and white hair, he was enjoying the German's discomfiture.

The German looked at Dariano. "Will you accept a bet of a quarter million francs?"

Dariano nodded.

The bearded man drew a cheque book and pen from his pocket. Filled out a slip and passed it to the inspector. There was a moment's delay at the cashier's desk. The inspector returned with a wire tray laden

with bundles of ten thousand francs each. The German pushed the tray without looking at it across the table. His eyes glared at Dariano. Nobody else bet. Dariano never looked at him. He dealt four cards —two for himself; two for the shipping man.

"Gard, blease!"

Dariano turned over his own, a six and an ace. He gave a knave to the punter. The croupier reached for the tray. The German laid down his hand. Three court cards. For an instant he looked as if he were going to run amok in the room. Then he controlled himself and sat quietly as a statue.

Dariano lit a cigarette quietly, pushed the shoe from him and stood.

"Gentleman, ladies," the croupier announced, *"les jeux sont finis.* The game is over."

CHAPTER XI

THEY should both have been gone by now Angela knew, both Morrie Sullivan and Solon Dariano. Morrie should have been back on his New England farm, and Dariano should have gone westward to Biarritz to take charge of the baccarat syndicate there. Morrie said he was enjoying himself here, going about the countryside seeing how the vines were grafted, taken care of, and how the flowers were grown. Everything about the soil interested him. Now he was passionately interested in the floriculture for scent. "Doggone, Angie," he told her, "I thought flowers were only grown for show—for table decorations. Amn't I the bonehead?" It fascinated him to see the little fields of lavender, the orange groves, the forests of mimosa. The flowers of these were carefully gathered and sold by the kilogram

to the perfumers of Grasse. There they were laid out on marble slabs and pounded in mortars, and distilled with alcohol, and from them the scent came. The olive plantations, the gardens of fig trees, he was never tired of them. And one day he made a discovery.

"Angie," he said, "all this countryside laid out to grow things—it grows nothing we can't do without. We can do without figs, we can do without grapes and wine. Olives, it wouldn't break anybody's heart if there weren't any. And as for scent, well, Angie—you can do without scent. Everything here's a fraud, Angie. Even agriculture. Dog-gone, give me one honest field of turnips against all the flower gardens of Grasse."

She felt sorry for him. She knew he was home-sick for New Canaan. Home-sick for the grass turning blue, and the cows heavy with calf. The frogs in the pools would have begun their shrill twitter by now, and the dogwood be putting out its fine, foamy spray, and tentatively the ap-

ple trees would be trying the Spring air, uncertain whether or not to put on their coats like a Chinese lady's. And in the boatyards sloops were being rigged ready for the racing season, but he wouldn't go.

"I'll go when you come with me, Angie."

"But, Morrie, I can't. I can't."

"Well, we'll see about that."

"But, Morrie, your farm, your everything—it will go to rack and ruin, Morrie."

" 'Twon't," he told her. "It's in good hands, Angie. Angie, I suppose it would be good policy to tell you it could go to rack and ruin for all I cared, but it won't. That farm's my job, and it's going to be taken care of, you or no you. I love you, Angie, but I'm not going to lay down on my job."

"It's no use, Morrie. I couldn't go back."

"All right, we'll see."

Dariano had spoken to her a few weeks before. She had gone to Monte for the day, and, coming out of the Sporting Club,

she had met the big gambler, and he had taken her to tea at the Café de Paris. Afterward they had walked in the Casino gardens. They sat down for a moment, watching a new yacht come into Monaco harbour.

"Miss Turnbull," Dariano said quietly, "early in the season I asked you to marry me and you gave me no answer."

Her heart nearly stopped beating, did stop for an instant, fluttered, went on. Oh God! Must she decide now?

"You thought you would like a little time to answer that?"

She said nothing. She didn't know what to say. All she could think of was "yes," and that seemed so silly she wouldn't utter it.

"Would you like a little more time, Miss Turnbull?"

He was so solid, so reliable, so understanding.

"It is very kind of you," she looked at him straight, "and if I may I should like to have a little more time."

"Then that is understood," he bowed.

She had thought that after this he would have gone on whither the business of the syndicate called him, but he remained. Baccarat was not the only iron the Greek brothers had in the financial fire. Wherever money was to be made by opportunity there the Darianos were. They worked steadily on the financial exchange. They leased ships to the French Government. They were financial agents in Mediterranean revolutions. Now there was talk of a new one in Greece, and possibly on that account Solon Dariano stayed on at Var. There between Marseilles and Genoa, he could be easily in touch with insurrectionary and political wires. On the other hand, it might not have been money or revolution that kept him. It might have been Morrie Sullivan.

But at any rate he unbent from being the sphinx-like banker at the baccarat game to taking an occasional hand in the chemin-de-fer. The baccarat was his profession, but the chemin-de-fer a relaxation.

A sort of second season had set in at Var. The Mediterranean liners from America were coming with their cargo of tourists. Folk were leaving Egypt. The prospect of a revolution in Rumania sent a colony of landed gentry, heavy with whiskers and gold reserve, to Var. Now, also, were here the unfortunate ones who had had no luck during all the season, and were waiting for one killing at the tables. They were sharp-faced and haggard, and they had passed the stage of railing against misfortune. Now they were silent. Men and women had the look of starved ranging dogs. They looked at the winner with surly, hateful eyes. Here, also, was "The young Pole."

The young Pole was tall and slender, with masses of black hair, and burning eyes. A slight, Byronic sort of figure. His name was spelt with so many "w"s and "z"s and "k"s that one gave it up in disgust and called him merely "The young Pole." If it had not been certified that he had won an Olympic tournament with the

foils, and defeated Aldi, the Italian, a scant six months before, one would have called him effeminate, what with his exaggerated evening clothes, his bracelet, his beautiful hands. He was a striking figure to look at, lounging through the rooms, and calling "banco"! here and there, when not sitting down and playing. He was notably the most unlucky man who had come to Var that year. He was also a bad player, for he was excitable. In moments of crisis at play he lost his head. He was very popular, as big losers always are in gaming-rooms. He never cursed his luck. He bowed quietly and paid.

The only player against whom he showed any animosity was Solon Dariano. At the big baccarat game he had lost nearly a million francs. The only way his anger showed itself was in elaborate courtesy toward the Greek gambler, very much as a great noble would fall back on courtliness, speaking to an inferior, to emphasize the gulf between them. Also, when Dariano was playing chemin-de-fer, he seized every

occasion possible to banco the Greek. He lost twice to a single win, and whatever his resources in Poland may have been, under the strain of the high play he was becoming nervous, becoming utterly despondent. He was playing this sort of game—when he stood on a five, his opponent received the four that would have made him nine had he drawn. When he drew on a five, he drew a five, a six, or a seven which utterly ruined his hand. He was sure born on a Friday the thirteenth, as some American at the table remarked. Yet he would not quit. . . .

The rooms were full. At the big table, where the minimum bank was fifty louis, a thousand francs, an ex-king was sitting quietly between Dariano and a big colonist from Algeria. The young Pole lay nonchalantly back in his seat. An Armenian sat silent as his own brown hills. Angela had taken a seat for a couple of rounds of the shoe. The stake was much too big for her, but recently she felt she was coming to an end of it somehow, and it didn't matter

much. Two or three other women were there, a former great Spanish dancer, who had now run to fat and mustachios; the widow of a Cincinnati brewer, whose heavy weeds and Spanish-like lace scarf seemed strangely out of place in the gay gambling rooms. There was also a slim, fair-haired Russian woman, with eyes blue and cold as ice. She was never without a cigarette in her hand. Her fingers were stained to the palms with nicotine; against the brown of her right forefinger a great emerald shone. . . .

"*Huit à la ponte!* Eight against the bank!" the croupier called. The young Pole pushed the shoe from him. Six times running his bank had gone down first time, and each time he had put up three thousand francs. A little sympathetic murmur went around the table. No luck, poor young Pole. This evening he was feeling it. He was white, haggard. His lips were blue.

The ex-king put up a bank of ten thousand francs, ran it once and passed it, taking

in his winnings with a smile. The Spanish dancer took it over and lost. She snarled like a bad dog. Angela put up her thousand and ran her bank twice, passed it. The Cincinnati lady took it over, and lost.

"Well, dearie," she said pleasantly to Angela, "I'm not kicking. I'm pleased to see you win." And she was, dear soul!

"How are they rolling, Angie?" Morrie had come up and was standing behind her.

"Good!"

"Attababy!" She smiled affectionately. She knew Morrie hated the game, but he never bothered her about it. He never gave her lectures. Good Morrie. It delighted her to see the people at the table smile toward him. None but didn't like Morrie. Even Dariano, who was now taking the bank, liked him, though he was jealous of the boy, wary of him.

"A bank of two hundred and fifty louis!" called the croupier. "A bank of five thousand francs."

"I'll see it," said the lady from Cincinnati.

"Banco prime!" snapped the young Pole. His eyes were blazing at Dariano. He claimed the right to banco first with a sort of violent emphasis. The croupier glanced at him quietly. The *chef de partie* moved closer. There was in the air that feeling as of an atmosphere charged with emotional thunder.

Dariano dealt.

"Carte!" asked the young Pole.

Dariano turned over a four and a three. He gave the Pole an ace. The Pole laid down his hand. Three aces. A murmur of sympathy went around the table.

"A bank of nine thousand five hundred francs!"

The brown Armenian tapped the table. A dozen or so players from the other tables had come and were standing about. Many of them were losers on the season, and their eyes were riveted on the pile of thousand and hundred franc notes on the baize before the croupier. They could no longer play a game so high, but they hung on to the tables vicariously feeling the

triumph and despondency of it. "Banco!" called the Armenian.

"Pardon, m'sieu!" the Pole's voice was chilly. *"Banco suivi!* I go it again."

The ring of faces around the table came closer. Another damned fool going up against Dariano! A woman looked across the table sympathetically at the young Pole, and clutched a ruby and gold crucifix about her neck. But Dariano had a natural eight.

Dariano pushed forward some banknotes to pay the Casino percentage and to make the sum up to round figures.

"Le maximum!" called the croupier. "A bank of twenty thousand francs. A bank of a thousand louis! A bank of twenty thousand francs!"

The young Pole put his hand in his inside coat pocket. He drew out a pigskin wallet with a coronet on it. He emptied it on the table, counting the notes. Between hundreds and thousands he made up the punt. His face was white and grim. The

chef de partie moved closer toward him. Quietly two of the Casino private detectives sauntered up. The signs of desperation in the man's face were evident, and the Casino is always ready to deal with desperation.

"Banco!" said the young Pole quietly.

The circle around the table grew thicker. It was recognized that the young Pole was having his last throw. It is a theory that with absolutely the last throw the luck turns. Also was it not the third coup, the danger point of the bank? And might it not be the beginning of the end for Dariano, who had all their money? Their eyes glistened. Of all the table, of all the circle, the Greek was the only one unmoved. Beneath the croupier's professional calm was excitement. Dariano dealt the cards.

The young Pole's face flushed with excitement as he looked at his hand.

"Non," he cried. He wanted no cards.

Dariano turned over his. Two queens.

The *chef de partie* looked curiously at the flushed Pole. Dariano flicked a nine out of the shoe.

"Neuf à la banque!"

The young Pole turned white, turned grey, as he put his cards down. He had had eight.

"Mais pourquoi ne les avex-vous pas abattués? Why didn't you throw them down? *Vous auriez gagné!* You would have won." The *chef de partie* turned away with a gesture half pity, half disgust. A chatter went around the table. How foolish. And yet what luck!

The young Pole pulled himself together. He rose from his chair. The Casino detectives came closer. The young Pole bowed.

"Messieurs, mesdames!" He might have been taking his leave at a formal party. He turned to go away. The detectives fell back. Ah, a good lad! No trouble, no fuss. A sportsman to the end.

Then the young Pole killed himself.

There was a crack, it might have been

the breaking of an electric light bulb, or the opening of a bottle of champagne in the bar around the screen. But it wasn't. The young Pole had reached under his left arm as though for his cigarette case. And there was a drift of smoke in the air that was not cigarette smoke, and there was a smell of powder that was not powder on Frenchwomen's shoulders. That was all. Not a thud even, for the detectives were carrying through a side door a young man who might have been drunk, or who might have had an epileptic fit. For an instant there was such silence, such silence that one could hear the conversation in the bar.

"My dear old boy, this chemin-de-fer is a mug's game. What I mean to say is: it's utterly idiotic. You see, only a fool——"

The croupier gathered up the Pole's stake and placed it in front of him.

"Encore le maximum!" he called. "Still the maximum. A bank of twenty thousand francs!"

And then a horrible thing happened. There was a rush for the dead man's seat.

Surely there would be luck there now. A man reached for it, and was thrust aside by a woman. Another woman caught at her, and her frock was ripped open to the waist. An old lady cut loose with a flow of obscenity in Italian. Angela felt herself caught by the arm.

"You come to hell out of here," Morrie Sullivan was commanding her. She made no remonstrance. She rose and went. She was feeling dazed and sick.

"A bank of twenty thousand francs!"

"Banco!" she heard the Armenian's deep voice.

And as they went toward the door the croupier's clear voice called out:

"La banque gagné. Neuf à la banque."

CHAPTER XII

IF anyone had told Angela in America that within little more than a year of leaving America she would have had marriage proposed to her by, and considered seriously the offer of, a professional Greek gambler, she would have been more than incredulous, she would have been shocked. To her, in the days of America, a Greek was someone who kept a candy store or a foul restaurant. Also, they were always having wars, and revolutions. But knowing Dariano, and Dariano's brothers slightly, she changed her mind. It was just as though one could draw an idea of Ireland from a drunken St. Patrick's Day parade—who could imagine that above this ludicrous, crapulous peasantry there were Irish gentlemen with the manners and chivalry of Crusader kings. No longer were the Greeks great in arms, but in po-

litical power, in finance, in brains, their grip was on the vitals of France and Russia and Italy. Even this banking at baccarat was not to them gambling. It was a certain financial turnover, with a ten per cent. in favour of the bank. They had money, these Greek brothers, they had steely nerves. In their all but Oriental minds they recognized what the Western never will—the omnipresence of the quality called luck. They dealt in luck, as other merchants might deal in commodities like wheat. They were as certain of luck as they were of death. When one brother's rhythm of luck was ended, another or an associate took the bank. Occasionally though, the one in bad luck stuck to the bank, whether to placate the gods by losing or to keep the gamblers hopeful, one couldn't tell. The minds of Greeks are deep minds. And they are queer minds—for the Darianos saw nothing wrong in gambling, but they would have recoiled in horror from the idea of dealing in spirituous liquors.

Angela had seen Solon Dariano play at

Var, at Monte Carlo, at Le Touquet, and, unconsciously, she had come to admire and like the big, sphinx-like man. Whether things were going badly with him, or well, he never changed a muscle in his face. She had watched him being pounded at the Sporting Club for five million francs, on the great night when the Principe Favilli had his enormous run of luck, and at the end of the sitting he was as calm as before. She watched him at Le Touquet the night he cleared out the Tatar oil king from Baku. All about the table, all in the rooms, were weak from the tension of the game, but Solon Dariano was as calm as though he had been playing a mild rubber of bridge. Only the Casino authorities, who cashed the Tatar's cheques, and Dariano knew how many hundred bundles of pink bank-notes had gone into that prosaic waste-paper basket, but after a week the Tatar, with his immense emeralds, with his fifteen servants, and four beautiful handmaidens, left Le Touquet, and France knew him no more.

She came to know Dariano when swimming at Paris Plage. The big Greek watched her cutting through the water with her fast trudgeon stroke, and came up to her when she came out.

"I hope you didn't mind my watching you, Miss Turnbull," he said. And when she looked at him she saw there was neither impertinence nor vulgar curiosity in his eyes. "But I like athletics. When I was young," he went on, "I was a good wrestler and a swimmer, too."

He was very modest she found out, later, from an attaché of the Greek legation. Dariano, when young, had been the best wrestler in Greece.

She liked him. She liked his way of living. He came to a place with an old valet, and kept to himself. Not for him the drinking and the dancing, and the hectic vulgarity of the Deauville and Riviera life. When not playing he was to be seen driving about in the fresh air, admiring, one might say, and one would be right, the scenery. His brothers had wives—the younger was even

suspected of having an assistant wife—but Solon was the anchorite of the family, and in an atmosphere where linen spats and a *belle amie* are *de rigueur*, this was notable. The players credited this to Dariano's brains, saying that the gambler was too clever to let a woman in on his game. But Angela knew that at heart and throughout, except for the steel nerve and subtle head, Dariano had the simplicity of a child.

He admired her beauty and her athletic quality. Here, in this jungle of female charms, where the women had the seductive, unwholesome atmosphere of tropical plants and flowers, she stood out like the rowan tree, like the mountain ash. Dariano knew too much of the world not to recognize that it was her mother's fault she was there at all; that it was her mother's fault she stayed there. It bothered him not a little to see her playing heavily at the big baccarat game. He read faces easily, did Dariano. Though her face seemed as calm as his, yet he knew all was not well. He

ventured to speak to her one day on the pier of Var.

"Miss Turnbull, why do you play so hard? Do you mind my asking you?"

"I don't mind. In the first place, because there's so little else to do."

"That is true," Dariano nodded. "Everything is calculated at these places so that you have to play."

"In the second place," Angela said, "I like it. I like it so much that I doubt if I can stop."

"Can you—please pardon me!—can you afford to play for such high stakes?"

"I can't."

"Then you know it's a vice."

"Of course it's a vice," she answered.

"You're very honest!"

"Honest, am I?" Dariano was not quick enough this time to catch the sudden whiteness of her face, her twist of mouth.

"Do you mind," she asked, "if we don't talk about it?" And she turned the conversation to the occurrences of the day before. She had been at the Nice races. It

had been more like a scene in a play than a race-course. Women who looked as if they had come out of Poiret's studio, as, indeed, most of them had. Englishmen trying to appear French; Frenchmen trying to appear English—the former bulky figures in slight, meticulously cut clothes, the latter, slight, dapper, swathed in tweeds cut like a horse blanket. A Chinaman, in coral-buttoned cap and padded jacket, talked to a jockey with the face of a murderer. An Indian rajah wore a sealskin vest, and carried an umbrella, most unrajahlike. French officers, gay in horizon blue uniforms, walked about with unutterably dowdy wives. Somewhere there were horses, and at intervals these ran, interrupting the music of the band.

Angela was in the queue of the twenty-franc totalizator ticket office when, in front of her, she saw Dariano.

"What are you doing here?"

"I'm betting," he said quietly.

"But I thought you would bet in the thousand franc office."

"I don't," he said. "I bet twenties. Do you know what will win?"

"I'm betting on Galéja."

"Is it a good horse?" asked Dariano. "I don't know anything about horses."

"Neither do I," said Angela. "But the waiter at the hotel said it would win."

"Then I'll have a shot at it," the big Greek gambler decided.

But Galéja, shameless as only a French horse or a French restaurant proprietor or a French duchess can be shameless, ambled home last, heedless of the shaken umbrellas and vile accusations against his ancestry made by the madding crowd. Dariano seemed quite cast down by his loss.

"And I thought you said he was a good horse!"

Angela began to like him more and more. It was hard to imagine that this big man, who had been a champion wrestler in his youth, and even now, when over fifty, had certain attributes of the child, a child's joy in simple things, and a child's innocence

in a rotten sector of the world, could be the grim, rock-like djinn of the baccarat table, who never flinched an eyelid when people were ruined in the game, and even shrugged his shoulders at a suicide.

She once had the temerity to ask him did this not worry him.

"No," he said. "People commit suicide in business, are ruined in business. Baccarat is business. People want to merchandise luck. Merchandizing is baccarat without moral or economic frills."

"It doesn't seem right," she said.

"It mayn't seem right to an Anglo-Saxon mind. Mine," he told her, "is a Greek mind. There are such things as Chinese minds, French minds, Indian minds. All have different economics, different moralities. None can say the other is wrong."

"One does, though."

"One is foolish!"

Then, one day, he did the most unexpected thing in the world. He asked her to marry him. He was coming into Var along

the Mandelieu Road in the usual two-horse chaise he affected and he met her on the sea front. He got out and walked with her until they came to a seat under the palm trees.

"Miss Turnbull," he said, "will you sit down for a minute?"

They sat down.

"Miss Turnbull, I have just been to see your mother, to ask her might I be allowed to present my addresses to you."

"Do you mean," Angela asked, "that you want me to marry you?"

"I mean that," said Dariano.

To be proposed to here was like a queer trick of Fate's, for nowhere was a setting of more romance and beauty. Westward, behind the Esterel, the sun was tinting the mountains with purple and crimson, deep purple and flaming crimson, and back of them the brown, smaller Alps drowsed like contented kine. Beneath their feet the Mediterranean broke in a foam, like the foam of wine, of some magic blue wine. Quiet as turtles, the isles of St. Marguerite

and St. Honorat lay on the azure bosom of the sea. And a little wind came down from the eyries of the Alps, and rustled each plume of feathers that the palm trees bore. In the East, over Monte Carlo, soon would rise the moon, the silvery Mediterranean moon. Somewhere an Italian labourer, ungrateful for all this beauty, sang a nostalgic song for his beloved south:

"O dolce Napoli!
O suol beato,
Ove sorridere
Volle il creato,
Tu sei l'impero—"

If any woman wished a setting for a proposal from the beloved, here was a perfect one. And here, Angela told herself, was she debating coldly whether she should marry this man, who was not of her own race, her own religion, her own mind, her own age. A matter of this kind should be debated in the cool seclusion of a library.

And she said: "I like you and I admire

you, but surely that is not enough for marriage."

"I don't know that it isn't," said Dariano. "I know what you are thinking of, but the word love is not a word that sits with dignity on the lips of a fat and not young man. But—I have faith that a bond will grow more readily out of liking and respect, than that liking and respect will grow from the loose term 'love.' "

"You know," she said, "what you offer me is a great temptation."

"I offer you," said Dariano, "someone to protect you, which you haven't got. I offer you home and security. You can have this Riviera life as much as you want, and when you want peace, I have a house near Venice, where you can go and dream and rest. And when you want the country, I have a place in Greece. Also, I am a good deal richer than anybody thinks. If it amuses you to gamble you can gamble, my dear. These things you may call temptations, but I call them a very little return

for gracing the life of a lonely and disliked man."

"Dariano," she said, "I might want to marry you for a very unworthy motive."

"For an urgent one, perhaps," he granted, "but no motive is unworthy if you are so honest as to admit it."

"I admit it, and I shall tell you all about it, Dariano, if—if we marry."

"Then it is only if," said Dariano.

"It is 'if,' Dariano, not 'only if'," she smiled at him. "I should tell you of that this minute but for another thing. May I tell you of that other thing, Dariano?"

"If you feel you want to," he said.

"I've never told anybody. I've never told myself. But there is a boy in America I was fond of. I was never in love with him, nor he with me I think, but—but he is in my mind a lot. Do you understand, Dariano?"

The Greek bowed. He did not look at her. He would not embarrass her by looking at her face.

"He was a silent, serious boy, this boy. He didn't care for money, he didn't care for fame. He was aloof, queer. I understood him. . . . He loved America, Dariano, which few people do. People enjoy America, and think they love it, but love is different. . . . It is like enjoying a big house, the chairs and luxury of it, but this boy loved the stones and rafters of the house, and would love it and stick by it if grass grew on the hearthstone. . . . Do you understand that, Dariano?"

He was silent a minute, and then he said slowly: "All Greeks do."

"I understood that in him, and I loved him for it. I don't know if I love him. But I always remember the silent, serious boy who loved his country, and to do that silently is so much bigger than desire for money or fame. I haven't heard from him for a long time. It may be I loved him, or it may be only a thing that impresses a person when young, like a great monument seen, or a wonderful story read. But until I am sure, Dariano, I will not come into

your house, or," her voice dropped, "into your heart."

Dariano rose and kissed her hand. "When you are ready," he told her, "my house and—and my all"—he said with dignity—"are open to you. And until then, and whether or no, I am always, in all things, at your service."

"Thank you, Dariano."

She sat there after he had gone, and suddenly the sun dropped behind the Esterel like a shot bird, and the mistral blew on the face of the waters, and the azure and calm sea became grey and spitting, and the mountains drew dark forbidding cloaks about them, and the air grew chill. And she knew all her fine feelings must be as nothing. There were only two choices left to her, Dariano and the anonymous secret burying ground between Monte Carlo and La Turbie. She had not enough courage to take refuge with the nameless dead, so that it must be Dariano. For only Dariano could replace the money she had spent out of what her father had left his wife and

daughter; spent without her mother's knowledge; spent madly, unconsciously, in a senseless effort to retrieve fortune—fifty thousand dollars, over a million of francs!

CHAPTER XIII

TO Mrs. Turnbull the proposal of Dariano was a godsend. If Angela acceded it would be her last problem settled. She told herself she was glad Angela had the chance to get settled, but down in her heart, unknown to herself, possibly, was the feeling that she would be free of all trammels. Also Dariano was so rich that he would not bother about money. If Angela were to marry a poor man or a man not in affluent circumstances, he might be vulgar enough to want half the money left by the late Turnbull, and Mrs. Turnbull didn't quite see how she could refuse. The difference between the income on a hundred thousand and on fifty thousand dollars is the difference between regality and comfort. Mrs. Turnbull was all for regality.

She knew the wealth of Dariano better

than Angela did, for at that Cercle Agricole, of which she was striving to be a shining light, all personalities were examined with a thoroughness that would have done credit to a police station. What new lover this woman had; what attraction had Nice for the Furest von Giltnichts; and was it true that Lady Mary Morgan had been seen on the battlements of Monaco with the he-dancer at the Café de Paris? and was it at two in the morning? One of the main topics of conversation was the riches of the newly-rich, and by what steps these had been achieved. Dariano's agents, they said, had bought the jewels of Russian refugees in Constantinople for next to nothing, and had sold them to the merchants of the Rue de la Paix for a fortune; Dariano had gipped the Greek Government during the war of millions in contracts; Dariano, through secret information such as Greeks always seem to have, had made a supplementary fortune over the exchange. Dariano had a pallazzo in Venice, while they, poor Grand

Dukes, had to live in farm-houses in Antibes. Dariano had estates in Greece. They, the brothers Dariano, owned the banking house of Thurhiles et Cie., of Trieste and Marseilles. This club of noblemen and noblewomen, who were huddling together for warmth, and propagating the belief that it was fashionable to be poor, had nothing but evil words for the Darianos and the Zaheriffs. Yet, Mrs. Turnbull knew shrewdly, were Solon or Archimède Dariano to apply for membership in the Cercle each Monseigneur would strive to be the first to propose him.

When Angela was married she would have a wonderful time. She would be Mme. Jasmine Howard-Turnbull without any staunch young Angela Turnbull to appear in the offing with upstanding New Worldliness to disconcert her, and many luxuries she wished for she could then afford, such as a lady-in-waiting. She had her eye on three already—any of whom, through stress of poverty, would be willing to come to her: an Austrian baroness, a

Spanish countess and the widow of a famous Irish general. They needed the money, and it would be so pleasant to have a woman of that kind, half chaperon and half servant. It would be very regal. Also, as mother-in-law of the great Greek banker, Dariano, her position would be very strong on the Riviera. All the young men who played baccarat, all the Hungarian counts and Russian nobles, would be eager to be with her, to dance attendance upon her. She could have the pick of the prettiest young men there. There would be no Angela Turnbull to shame her, there would be Mme. Dariano. Also, it would be pleasant to visit Angela at Venice—she had heard Venice spoken very highly of—and in Greece. Greece was the Orient, wasn't it? Or near enough to be called so. She could read in fancy in the Anglo-Continental papers: "Mme. Jasmine Howard-Turnbull has returned to Var, after a tour in the Orient." Or "Mme. Jasmine Howard-Turnbull is in Paris for a few days, having arrived from Venice,

where she has been visiting her daughter at the Pallazzo degli Tedeschi."

She ran straight to Angela and kissed her.

"Oh, you lucky girl. Oh, you lucky, lucky girl!"

"How, come?" Angela asked curtly.

"Haven't you seen Dariano? Hasn't he said anything to you?"

"I've seen him," Angela answered, "and he's asked me to marry him."

The older woman's face became hard suddenly.

"My God! Angela! You haven't refused him!"

"No. No, I haven't."

"Then that's all right. My dear," said Mrs. Turnbull, "this is the proudest day of your life."

"I haven't accepted him either."

"But, Angela, you're mad." Her mother got worried. "Good God! Do you mean you've let him get away without accepting him."

"Just that!"

"But why? In heaven's name, why?"

A strange, savage quality rose in Angela's bosom at the sight and thought of her mother attempting to push her into this marriage. Much as she liked Dariano, much as she felt friendly toward him, yet now every defect he had she used as a weapon to hurt the woman to whom she should have been everything, and to whom she was only a useless encumbrance.

"Mother," she looked at the elder woman straightly, "do you realize I don't love this man?"

"Love," Mrs. Turnbull said, "is a very overrated thing, Angela, and it isn't at all necessary for success in marriage. Your father and I were an ideal couple——"

"Were you?"

But Mrs. Turnbull decided to pay no attention to this remark.

"—yet I didn't love him, as schoolgirls understand love."

"I think that is evident," Angela said.

For an instant her mother thought she would lose control of herself. In the slums

she would have struck her daughter. In ducal circles she would have said: "Mademoiselle, I find you impertinent!" and so, she fondly believed, have crushed her. But she must be canny, she must be careful.

"Angela," she said sympathetically, "what do you find wrong with Dariano?"

"He is a common gambler."

"If he is a common gambler," said Mrs. Turnbull, "so is the Grand Duke Peter, so is the Archduke John, so is Mrs. Deliverance Lowell, so is Lady Mary Prideaux. They don't know where to stop, but he does. Angela, Dariano is a great banker, a great financier."

"He is old. He is fat."

"Angela, if he is somewhat older than you, so much the better. All marital unhappiness comes from two young people being cooped up together. And he is not too fat, Angela. I find him a handsome, dignified man."

"He is a Greek, Mother."

"Angela, don't be narrow."

"Mother," she asked suddenly, "I am

an American. Doesn't it ever strike you I should like to marry an American?"

"Angela," her mother implored, "don't talk to me of American marriages. The dreadful rush in the morning to get your husband off to business; the dull, dull days until he comes home, and when he does he is so tired, all that is in his mind is bed and rest." Mrs. Turnbull, in her new surroundings, now considered she had been a martyr most of her life. She had rearranged her existence in her mind, so that, looking back, she could see herself, a woman of taste and infinite charm, married, when quite a child, to a man who was only a money-grubber, and not in the first flight of grubbers at that. She had silently, as becomes the better sort of martyr, suffered the dull American life. She could recall, with a shiver of horror, the commuters' train rolling into the little American station and ejecting its cargo of commuters, a rabble-ish domestic army charging a suburban townlet. And the games of bridge in the evening, with people whose

every gown you knew, in whose card play every move was ridiculously transparent. Oh, how could she have suffered that for so many years. An American marriage, except in the very best of circles, where wealth permitted you as a luxury what the Europeans enjoyed as a matter of routine, was a dull and an ugly thing.

"Angela," she said softly, "remember what a thing this marriage would mean for you. You are not getting any younger, Angela, and husbands are scarce. You are not a rich girl. We are so poor," she let fall a phrase she had learned at the *Cercle Agricole*. "We are so poor," she sighed, "since the war!"

"We are so what?" asked Angela, "and since when?"

Mrs. Turnbull flushed. One of her dislikes against Angela was on account of the fact that before her she could indulge in no pretence. With other American women, and in public, one could indulge in pretence, for the reason that they would not contradict one flatly. But Angela would.

"Angela was what the French call," said Mrs. Turnbull to herself, "an *enfant terrible*." Which is precisely what Angela was not.

"At any rate," Mrs. Turnbull sighed, "I'm sure you will marry him."

"I wouldn't bank on that, Mother, if I were you," Angela answered. But she knew in her heart that she would marry Dariano, that she would have to marry Dariano.

CHAPTER XIV

ALL the time she was losing so heavily, Angela felt such a weight of resentment against her mother that she was ashamed of it. At home in America she had put up with her mother's whims and pretensions and selfishness with ease. "Poor mother!" she would say. But since coming to the Riviera her mother had become nearly outrageous.

It wasn't her mother's fault she had lost, was losing. But her mother was a contributing cause. Now and then—more than now and then, every month, every week even—there was an extraordinary phenomenon at the Casino. You would meet people there who had arranged to stay all winter. They had taken out season cards at the golf links, bought subscriptions for all the opera, chartered automobiles for months ahead. One day they

would be telling you of their plans a week ahead, inviting you to their box at the Battle of Flowers, making engagements with you for Nice races. One day their faces would be absent from their favourite table. You would pay no notice. Two days later they would still be absent. And you would ask where were the Such-and-Suches.

"Oh, they left on the five o'clock train on Wednesday."

"Oh, but I thought they were going to stay all the season."

"Mrs. Such-and-Such's mother was ill, I heard, and Mr. Such-and-Such couldn't allow her to travel alone. They'll be back by Easter, they said."

The truth of it was that the Such-and-Suches had been cleaned out at the gaming tables, and had invented this little story of Mrs. Such-and-Such's mother, Mrs. So-and-So, being ill, so as to save their faces. As if everybody didn't know what the matter was. Now, business was given as an excuse; now, politics. Occasionally, some ill-

bred male or female rascal simply said that they were broke to the wide and had to clear out. But in the paradise of Var, where there are held to be no misfortunes present, anything like this was frowned on. If one were knave enough to lose all one possessed, one was pardoned if one invented an illness of great urgency, as of Mrs. So-and-So. The air of Var is filled with sunshine, and excuses for leaving it. . . .

Angela envied these folk who had somewhere to go when Luck had definitely turned her disdainful back on them. They had a home somewhere in England, in Ireland, in America. They had interests to help forget the bad luck at the gaming tables; friends. She had nothing.

It was on the fourth night of Dariano's bank that she got badly nipped. For two nights before the bank had been doing badly—a woman Angela knew had won a quarter million, and the word had gone out that the Darianos' run of luck had ceased. From Monte, from St. Raphael, from Nice, the gamblers came to pluck the Greeks. Old

ladies who were supposed to have died in their villas years before drove down from the hills in their victorias to punt against the losing Greeks. It was as though the wolf pack had gathered to prey on travellers exhausted in a mountain pass. Hither came the Russians, chatty, emotional men; hither came English, outwardly haughty, shy; hither came the French, voluble, cool as rain; hither came Hungarians, aloof, very great gentlemen; hither came Spaniards, very quiet, very courteous; hither came Portuguese, shifty-eyed blighters; hither came Italians, the fair Gothic Italian of the North, very dangerous, and the dark soft Italian of the South, more dangerous still; hither came a great Dutch poet; hither came a great French prize-fighter; hither came a great English jockey. Hither came great ladies, dressed dowdily, mean as to money, talking slangily as guttersnipes. Hither came prostitutes, treating bank-notes as though they were tissue paper; gowned by Papuin, talking as great ladies should.

Because she had always been a favourite with the Casino officials, invariably courteous, winning with grace, losing with so pleasant a smile that it made the winners, so they said, reluctant to take her money; because she was beautiful, and would grace the party; because of these things she found no difficulty in getting a seat at the big baccarat game, where many rich and famous players were turned away with regrets. "Miss Angela Turnbull" sat between an *Altesse royale,* who was prince of a reigning Latin House, and a "M. Schmidt" who dealt in lighter-than-air craft. Back of the table, around it, three deep, the ordinary punters stood. Jewels were glittering, eyes were glittering, aloft light was glittering from the thousand facets of the candelabra. One felt suddenly it was one of the clock.

Down the room came the Darianos, Solon and Archimède, and the worried brother with the beard. Came the man with the waste-paper basket stuffed with money, came the gunmen, came the French Gov-

ernment official. As Archimède Dariano was about to take his seat he evidently changed his mind, spoke to the older man. Solon sat down in front of the shoe.

As she looked at him, Angela felt the Greek dominate the table, dominate the room. He was so big, so solid, his grey moustache and greying hair gave him a dignity the younger, suaver brother did not have. Archimède had gallantry. Solon had dignity and power. His brown eyes were clear, his olive skin was clear. His face had no expression on it, but it was alive somehow, alive with power. She noticed his hands. They were not beautifully kept like the younger man's. They were stubby and powerful, and roughly clean, as though scrubbed.

"A bank of a million francs," called the croupier. "Gentlemen, make your bets."

There was a moment's hesitation. The gamesters had looked forward to playing against Archimède, who was notoriously out of luck. Of Solon they were afraid, not so much of his luck, as of the appearance

of him, like a strong city, impregnable. But they were there to gamble.

"Dix mille francs—ten thousand francs," said M. Schmidt, and he threw the bundle on the table.

And then suddenly, from all quarters, thousand-franc notes fluttered to the table, were laid out fanwise, or in business-like bundles which the croupier counted deftly. Dariano stretched his fingers to the box.

"Rien ne va plus," called the croupier. "No more bets."

The silence was as oppressive as the silence before a thunderstorm.

"A card for Number One, the left side of the table. A card for Number Two." The soft flicking of the pasteboards.

"Quatre au Premier. Au Deuxième baccarat. Six à la Banque!" the croupier announced. "The left hand side, four. The right, nothing. The bank was six."

With his trowel-like board he gathered up the notes from the table, counted them, arranged them in packets of ten thousands

each, snapping home elastic bands. He crammed the Casino's percentage in pink slips down the ravenous Casino slot. He looked inquiringly at Dariano. Dariano paid no attention.

"A bank of a million francs," called the croupier again. "Gentlemen, to your game."

A sort of madness seemed to come on the crowd. They attacked Dariano's bank recklessly. They had come from afar to gamble. The bundles of thousand-franc notes in front of the croupier, ranged like a huge cube, seemed to fascinate them. They piled their own thousands on the green cloth, until the bank-notes from such a plethora of them seemed meaningless, only pink slips of paper in a child's game. Occasionally somebody elbowed his way angrily through the crowd. Attendants moved around with books of blank cheques, and paper and ink. Three times Angela signed cheques.

"He must go down!" she told herself feverishly. "He must lose."

She put up a thousand twice and then

madly put up ten. She lost. She half-rose in her chair, sat down again.

"Will you take a cheque on an American bank?" she asked.

"We will take a cheque on a Chinese bank," smiled the cashier. Only when utterly down and out, the Casino's shrewd philosophy went, would a player give a worthless cheque. When he was utterly down, the Casino had no more use for him, and it was a cheap way of getting rid of him. It wrote off two per cent. against bad cheques.

"Two thousand dollars, *ça fait,* thirty-three thousand francs."

She began betting badly. Winning with small coups, losing on big ones. Where the minimum bet was a thousand, the pink slips vanished with inexplicable rapidity. She was down to her last three.

"I can't leave now," she said. "My God! I can't leave now. I must cash another cheque."

But still she lost. And then suddenly she felt that the bank was about to lose. Now

the bank's run was over. Four daring coups and she would be back where she started. Those who had still money left were piling it on. Dariano's hand was stretched out for the cards. Now for their innings.

Dariano looked around the table, coolly, deliberately; thought for an instant; withdrew the hand stretched out toward the shoe; stood up.

"Gentlemen, the game is finished," said the croupier.

CHAPTER XV

I

IT seemed to her, in these days of losing that she went around in the sunshine like one who is dead. She was surprised that the ordinary functions of existence carried on at all, that she ate, that she walked, that she smiled. Mechanically one portion of her brain operated, directing the business of life, while another portion of it went around like a squirrel in a toy treadmill asking: "Did I do this mad thing? Did I sign those cheques? Did I gamble as crazily as all that? It's just a mad dream!" But it wasn't, she knew.

And then she would say to herself: "God! I must get this back!"

"But how?"

"The luck must change! It must change!"

She gave up going there in the after-

noons when the chemin-de-fer was on. It seemed to her paltry, this chemin-de-fer, compared with the state and drama of the big baccarat game, the hush and tension. Outside, but for a *guingette* or so open for chauffeurs and night workers, and a foul cabaret or two in the evil quarters of the town, Var slept. The moon sped westward above the Mediterranean sea. Only the monks of Saint Honorat were awake, the brown monks saying their white prayers. The battlements of the old Provençal town took on power and majesty in the night, in the moonlight. From the ancient tower the ancient bell rang out, one brazen, vibrating note, one of the morning. And on that stroke the Greeks, with their faces brown as rocks, hard as rocks, came down the aisle of the Casino.

"A bank of a million francs," the croupier's ritual, "gentlemen, make your bets. . . ."

All day long she would be numb, as dead, unliving. But once dinner was over the losses of yesternight faded, and the possi-

bilities of the coming evening took shape and colour. At baccarat miracles were always happening. A young Moslem prince at Deauville this year pawned his last ring and placed a thousand-franc note on the table, the bank on that side went down three times running. He had eight thousand francs. He placed the eight on the other side and won twice. He had thirty-two thousand. He returned to the first side he bet on. He ran it twice there. He had now one hundred and twenty-eight thousand francs. In three days he had broken the Italian syndicate that was running the bank. A dozen people who were at Var this minute had seen it.

There was also the case at Nice, a week ago, of the Russian lady who played five thousand francs against the bank held by an American. She had fainted in the crush about her, and did not know what was going on. The bank went down four times in succession, and her money, lying on the table, in less than ten minutes amounted to eighty thousand francs. Only when she was

afraid of collapsing altogether did she rise. The croupier had called to her: *"Prenez votre mise, madame!"* "Take your stake." And only then did she know what had happened. Things like these were always occurring.

If she plunged once with ten thousand francs with a bad streak of the bank, and let it ride five times she would have three hundred and twenty thousand francs. And ten thousand francs was only six hundred dollars! Six hundred dollars to win nearly eighteen thousand, more, nearly twenty thousand. It was a dreadful risk but—but the luck must turn.

It was no use starting gently, for when the luck was in favour of the bank at first the Darianos had the knack, the "baccarat sense" folk called it, of quitting before the luck turned. . . .

So after dinner she danced a little, or talked with this one or that one, or sat by and watched while her mother played her excellent game of bridge. Later on she would go down to the Casino by the late

'bus. The late 'bus carried down all the real gamesters. They would check their coats and stroll in, perhaps, for a while to the opera, or walk around talking to friends, or risk twenty-franc pieces at the neutralized roulette known as *"Boule."* It was so amusing to watch the French people play for franc pieces. All this time Angela would be keen as a knife, cold, a very different person from the terrified girl of the morning. And the the opera would be over, the tourists go home from their mild game of chemmie, and as the hour approached one the heavy gamblers would gather, like communicants of some esoteric faith about to celebrate their ritual.

"Gentlemen, a bank of a million francs. Make your bets . . . !"

And when she sat down the cool feeling left Angela. A sort of fever came on her. The hour or so the big game lasted passed without her taking note of time. Cheques she cashed she lost count of. The only thing she knew was that she would not get up. The more she lost, the more she tried to

convince herself that the luck would change. The faces about her at the table were new faces now—the old ones had gone. Folk had won or lost and gone. But still she stayed on.

"Gentlemen, the game is finished."

She had felt at first that luck would change immediately, but now she knew she would have to wait. She was as certain as ever that her lucky week was coming. But she would have to arrange affairs. Now that she was taking care of the family money there was no difficulty. She wrote to their bank in Stamford that she and her mother had been making purchases which called for the outlay of a good deal of money, and borrowed against their holdings. A little later she wrote instructing the bank to sell out a quantity of war loan. It was just a little difficulty, she told herself, that would be adjusted easily.

If it didn't adjust itself here it would adjust itself at Le Touquet, where they were going for the summer. At the Casino de la Forêt there was tremendously heavy

gambling, and now she knew baccarat and chemmie, she would not make beginners' mistakes.

Yes, all one had to do was to keep one's nerve. She had just wandered into something she hadn't known anything about, and got into difficulties. A fool would get out at once and cut the losses, and maybe that would be the proper thing to do. But she couldn't afford to do it. She would have to stay on and make the best of it. It was only a question of waiting until the good luck evened up with the bad, and——

And once out of it, she swore, never again!

II

At Le Touquet the luck was worse than ever. At a couple of chemin-de-fer games she got cleaned out pretty badly. A Swedish countess, a great blonde woman with the most insolent manner on earth, strolled to a table she was playing at and bought a passed bank. The Swedish woman smoked

a cigarette in a long turquoise holder, and had a train of admirers, young Frenchmen, young Poles, who followed her around the gambling rooms. She put up a bank of three thousand francs.

"Banco!" said Angela.

The Swedish woman dealt the cards without looking at her, talking to her little court all the time. The Swedish woman won.

"Banco!" Angela called again. The woman's indifference irritated her. Had she no manners at all?

She had not. Again she dealt, stopping in the middle of the deal to laugh at some joke a boy had made. Again she won. She swept the table with a haughty, aloof look. She looked through Angela. For the first time in her gambling experience Angela lost herself in fury. Already nine thousand francs had gone by the board.

"Banco toujours!" she called. "Again I banco!"

At any rate, thought Angela, it is the third coup, and this time the bank will go

down. She put up twelve thousand francs. A murmur went about the table. Ah! she had courage, the American miss!

"Regarde, Pierre," the Swedish woman said to a dark, effeminate boy, *"je gagne toujours!* Look, Peter, I always win."

And she did!

Within three minutes Angela had lost twenty-one thousand francs, between one thousand and fifteen hundred dollars. And not by bad luck, she reminded herself. "You can't call that bad luck, Angie! You let the woman get your goat. Lord!" she asked herself with a shiver, "how much was she in the hole now?" She didn't dare think.

At any rate, one thing she mustn't do was lose her nerve. She must sit tight and think about it.

After lunch she went to find her mother. She would have to make some more financial changes. She found Mrs. Turnbull in the great hotel lounge, talking to a red-headed Irishwoman, a Lady Gilligan, spouse of one Sir Michael Gilligan. Lady Gilligan was what is described in Ireland

as a "grand rounded woman." She was a year or two above fifty, and the speech of Cork flowed from her tongue like rich cream. Sir Michael Gilligan had achieved riches and honours by supplying the English army with woollen blankets during the war.

"Mother—how d'you do, Lady Gilligan?" Angela said. "May I speak to you for an instant?"

"My dear child, what is it?"

"It's a little private matter, Mother, about money!"

"But, honey chil'," Mrs. Howard-Turnbull was very Southern this summer, old Maryland aristocracy, to wit, and her accent was negroid, "the' ain't anything private about money."

"It's just this: I want to change a couple of investments at the bank."

"Honey," said Mrs. Turnbull, "you know I know nothing about money. You do what you wish. Why, Lady Gilligan, we Southe'ners are mos' awful about money. Hif I didn't have this shrewd Yankee

daughter I'd be in the poorhouse, I sure would, Lady Gilligan."

"But, sure, I thought all Americans were grand about money, Mrs. Howard-Turnbull."

"Lady Gilligan, you don't know the Southe'n aristocracy. We haven't any conception of money."

" 'Tis the same wid us Irish aristocracy, ma'am. Myself I'm a MacCarthy of Desmond, and when I married Mick Gilligan, I said, Mick, you wee thrawneen of a tailorin' fella, do you know what you're getting? You're getting a MacCarthy of Desmond. Up now, my lad, and show what you're made of. I've got the gentility. Let you be getting the money, says I."

Lady Gilligan paused a moment.

"We Howards of Baltimore," said Mrs. Howard-Turnbull, "we're under a double handicap. Besides our Southern lethargy, our descent from our ancient English family unfits us for economy. We Howards are a cadet branch of the family of which the Duke of Norfolk is head."

"Aw, begob! Him with the whiskers!" said Lady Gilligan.

"And yet I often think," said Mrs. Howard-Turnbull, "that my influence helped my husband toward success."

"Sure I know it! I know it!" said Lady Gilligan. "Didn't Mick—Sir Michael, I mane—often say to me: 'Look at ye now, rowlin' in a feather bed, one of the ladies o' the land.' 'Begob Mick,' says I, 'my delicate comsumptive fella, if you hadn't me behind you, leatherin' stones at your tail, you'd never have taken the leps.' "

"Isn't Lady Gilligan delicious, Angela?" Mrs. Howard-Turnbull purred. "So naïve! So Irish!"

But Angela had fled. "If you'd stayed much longer there, Angela, my girl," she told herself, "you'd have proved you were an imperfect lady, by vomiting."

III

As the season at Le Touquet went on and her losses grew, Angela began to get fright-

ened. She had explained that she wanted this mortgage called in, those bonds sold to the manager of her Connecticut bank for the purpose of investing in properties in France, now that the dollar was mounting in value against the franc. The manager, an old friend of her father's, wrote warning against foreign properties, and to avoid discussion she had answered rather huffily. One morning she noticed a letter from the bank to her mother, and as she was always first in the sitting-room for coffee and rolls, she impounded it. This action gave her the first dreadful feeling of crime. It was a letter of protest against selling out American securities of standing for foreign ones of dubious value. Her mother never saw that letter. Angela, in her capacity as secretary, answered it in so haughty a manner that the man at home bothered no more. It cost her a lot of heart-burning to write in such a tone to one who had always been so considerate to her, but it had to be done. When she saw how much of the family money she had lost, she began to feel that

it was impossible to win it back. It would take phenomenal luck. And her nerve was going back on her. Even if the luck did come now, she wouldn't have courage to follow it. . . .

It was often in her mind, so honest really was she at heart, to make a clean breast of the whole matter. Had her father been alive she would not have hesitated an instant, but had her father been alive this would never have occurred. Nobody in America would understand—if Morrie Sullivan were here to talk to he might understand. Whether he understood or not, he would buckle down to see what was the best thing to be done under the circumstances. But Morrie wasn't here. And one couldn't write that sort of thing. "Dear Morrie: I am in an awful fix. I have lost thirty-five thousand dollars gambling at baccarat——" Morrie would think she had suddenly gone mad. Angela, the little girl he said good-bye to, in all her clean New England innocence, to be caught in the

third circle of a gambling hell. No, it couldn't be put on paper. . . .

About Le Touquet the pine forests are fragrant. A little breeze wanders down through Belgium from the Baltic and sets the trees a-murmur, and there are dunes where the sea-thrift flares in swathes of pink. The sands are golden in the evening sun and in the distance one can see faintly the quiet land of England hover over the green-sea-water. Here, as at Var, was a paradise. Here one could be at peace, wandering by the foreshore, wandering among the dunes, bright with sea flowers, making little songs in one's heart. Here out of one the best would arise, as out of the ground flowers rise. But here, as at Var, lest one should achieve too much simplicity and holiness, in which there is no profit for the resort keeper, the intelligent French people had placed a Casino, with harmless "boule" for the natives, and baccarat, charged with dynamite for the foreigner. A great nostalgia for New Canaan shook

her. Also she felt that, once she were there, she would find friends to whom she could tell her troubles, and who would stand by her against her mother. For she needed somebody to stand by her. When Mrs. Turnbull should hear of the losses incurred at baccarat, she would go all but crazy. What she would do, what she would say, was impossible to conceive. She had heard nothing as yet, for it was one of the phenomena of baccarat that everyone sees you when you are winning; the good news flies apace, and folk whom you hardly know are your beaming friends, but when luck is against you none notice your gallant stand against the imminent deadly luck. There is none to applaud your challenge to The Armenian Wolf, or to admire your courteous smile, and bow when you get it in the neck. But this phenomenon, I find cynics to say, is not peculiar to baccarat, but to every department of human endeavour.

She tackled her mother one morning after *petit déjeuner*. Mrs. Turnbull had

been writing to Var to arrange for rooms for the winter.

"Mother, when are we going back to America?"

"Oh, some day, Angie."

"Mother, that is not definite enough. When are we going?"

"As for me," said Mrs. Turnbull. "I never care if I see the place again."

"Mother," Angela said softly, "I've never asked you for very much before, but —please let us go back. Let us go back now."

"I should think not!" said Mrs. Turnbull decidedly. "What! Go back to where everything is dull as ditch water, where there are no smart people except in places where, unless you've got millions, they won't let you in? Angela, you're crazy!"

"I'm not crazy, Mother, I want to go back."

"You'd hate it, Angela. Take it from me, kiddie, you'd loathe it. Listen, you know what you pay for your dresses here —well, you'd pay three times that in New

York. And perfumes, and all the little things that make life worth living. They're ordinary things here. In New York they're luxuries. I tell you what, kiddie—you don't know when you're well off."

"All these things don't count, Mother."

"You can bet your life they count with me!"

"Mother, I want to go back. I must go back."

"Why?" Mrs. Turnbull's voice began to take an edge on. Her sloe-black eyes fired up threateningly.

"I can't exactly say why——"

"Well, I can," Mrs. Turnbull said. "You see me enjoying myself. You see me dancing. You see me having nice partners. You see people being pleasant to me, and you can't stand it. I'll tell you what you are, Angie, you're a kill-joy. Oh, I guess America's the place for you."

"Well, let me go back alone?"

"Where to, God sakes? You ain't got any relatives there to put you up for a long visit. Anyways you'd be back here in a

month. Waste all that car-fare just for an idea? No, Miss, you don't."

"I want to go back and get a job."

"At what?" laughed Mrs. Turnbull. "And even if you did land a job, do you think I'm going to let all the crowd I knew go around and say: Jessie Turnbull's alone in France, now, with her husband's money, and carrying on so that sweet little Angie couldn't stand it? My stars! Have 'em backbiting me, and gossiping about me when their tongues are just hanging out with envy. No, Miss, you don't stick any play like that onto me. You stay right here by momma. When you want to get rid of me you go and get you a man.

"Why, look-a-here," said Mrs. Turnbull, "you've got everything in the world here. You got tennis. You've got swimming. You can play that fool game of yours, baccarat, to your heart's content. I ain't kicking. Go and enjoy yourself. It ain't my fault if you can't loosen up. You're just like your old man. He'd got stiffness of the moral fibres——"

"I don't wish to hear anything said against my father!"

"Well, I'm not saying anything against your father, though there's a pile I could, but I hope I know enough to show I'm a lady without your telling me. America! Say, you ought to go around dressed as 'Hail, Columbia!' America! America's only an excuse to get tanked on the Fourth of July!"

"Well," thought Angela, "that's that! That's that!" said she with a mental gesture of weariness. No matter what happens, there is no understanding or sympathy to be had in that quarter. She smiled wryly as she thought of songs about "dear old mother." These song-writers, she opined, must have been away from home a long time and of course, they were men. If they were women always in company with an ultra-modern mother . . . !

She became hard. She became cold and hard. Of the money her father had left, did not half belong to her? If her father had been asked he would certainly have

said half belonged to her. Very well, half she would have. When her half, that is, fifty-odd thousand dollars was spent, then was the time to worry. In the meanwhile, there was Var again in the winter. Some day, somehow, her luck must change. But at any rate, she must fight her own fight. There was no sympathy, no love, no help for her in the small, selfish bosom of the woman who had borne her.

CHAPTER XVI

IT seemed to her so unfair, that when she had such little time to live the earth should suddenly have exploded into glory. Never had the moon such vast goldness. The minute twitter of the tree frogs had a strange beauty in the perfumed Provençal dusk. The small, dark, Italian bees played their bassoon-like music, fluttering from the soft blossoms of the peach tree to the delicate flower of the orange. And the Mediterranean, treacherous as a cat, put on its cloak of finest azure. Soon the mulberry trees of Var would be a canopy of glory.

She would have to leave it all. For she could not marry Dariano now.

Since the night the young Pole had killed himself under her eyes she had not been able to touch a card. She had not been able to look at Dariano.

He had been so young, so fine. She could not get out of her mind the clean-cut face; the graceful, almost royal, manner of him, the beautiful, powerful hands. She remembered his bow: *"Mesieurs, mesdames,"* as he said good-bye . . . She had heard, since, that he was the last of his house, and the pride of it. No swordsman in Europe was his better. And now he was dead shamefully. . . . The foul-handed Casino attendants had dragged the young aristocrat away, his coat over his head. And Dariano, whose luck had killed the boy, had never fluttered an eyelid. She remembered that Dariano had been smoking one of his heavy Egyptian cigarettes. It had been smoked halfway, but the ash still remained on it, half cigarette and half ash. When the young Pole killed himself the ash still remained on his cigarette, so little of tremor did the suicide occasion him. She could not get over that, that the ash from his cigarette did not fall.

No, she could never marry Dariano. In the Venetian palace she would see the Pole's

haggard handsome face. Above the gondolier's cry she would hear his *"Messieurs, mesdames . . .*," taking farewell of folk and life and gambling. She would see him in the vineyards of Greece. And every time she saw Dariano she would see the unbroken ash of his cigarette. . . .

Besides, her place was, in fellowship, with the young Pole, with the anonymous host who had died ungallantly, for had she not gone through the agonies they knew, must have known? She knew the feverish hope, later the sleepless nights. Had she not gone down to the foreshore, as they must have gone, and called loudly upon God? "God, can't you hear me? God, I've never done anything terribly wrong for you to desert me now. God, you can help me. Won't you?" They must have gone there, as she had, and implored, until they were nothing but a voice and a troubled heart. They must have known the agony by the sea. They must have listened, half crazy for an answer. They must have heard, as she had heard, the chill, the tremendous

silence. No, her place was with the young Pole, and the other deserted, ungallant dead.

Not with Dariano!

And as the world had never before seemed so lovely to her, so, never before had Morrie Sullivan seemed so sane, so brown, so handsome. Ah, God! she wished he had never come to Var! It would be so easy if he had never come.

He was standing above her now, bringing her out to dance.

"We sail next week, Angie."

She shook her head.

"Shake the old bean as much as you like, Angie, but you come, all the same. C'mon, let's dance."

They swung through the great ornate room to the patter of the drum and the moaning of the wind instruments. His step was long and free, proud and free. She said to herself, he is unshackled, unbroken. He has not to pretend. He is powerful and free.

"Morrie," she asked suddenly, "when you get across will you do something for

me? When you see the dogwood of New England, and the apple-blossoms, and the laurel, and the rhododendrons in flower, and the moon coming up over the Sound, and the white boats on it, will you remember me to them? Just think of me, and the trees will know."

"Do it yourself, Angie. In less than three weeks you'll be there. You can say: Good morning, Connecticut. How are you? How 'a' you been?"

She shook her head. Turned her face quickly away.

"That's sure one bad habit you picked up in Europe, Angie—shaking your head. . . ."

CHAPTER XVII

NOW that she was about to leave the red and golden land of dreams for the blue spaces of Death, she set about her preparations carefully, coldly, setting in order all she could. She would tell Dariano she could not marry him, and she would see that Morrie Sullivan went back to New England, and then one afternoon, having removed all identification marks from clothing, at Nice she would board the boat for Corsica, and in the night, when the stars were out, in the blue half light of the stars, when Monte Carlo had dropped astern behind the dark Mediterranean lake, she would slip overboard, as many and many a one had done before her, for the anonymous cemetery below La Turbie does not contain all the ruined folk of Monaco. The deep Mediterranean is dark with secrets.

She smiled acidly as she thought what comments her disappearance would bring forth. Her mother would note the loss of half the fortune, and believe she had gone to make a career for herself, and purse her lips, and say something biting about American ideals. "Grab and get out!" And Dariano would believe she had gone after Morrie Sullivan, and Morrie Sullivan would not know what to make of it. He would ponder at night in the New England farm-house, and think: "She would never come back with me. She would never say why." And he, too, would be constrained to imagine an intrigue. "She was in love with somebody, poor Angie," he would say. "Well, if she ever needs a friend, or shelter——" And he would always be on the look-out for news of her. And the police officers would shrug their shoulders and make their all-embracing gesture of an arm crooked like an elephant's trunk. *"Affaire de jeune femme,* a young woman's business!" meaning she might have gone off with a waiter or a prince. Her

mother would not pursue inquiries very far, for she would be certain of her own theory: "I guess you'll find Angie in America somewhere, following a career of some kind, battening on my money. Well rid of her anyway!" She would miss the *dame de compagnie* she could not now employ more than she would miss her daughter!

And none would ever fancy she was in the Mediterranean's deep bosom. . . .

She sought Dariano out. It was not a difficult matter. The big gambler was always driving to and from the Esterel, or sitting in front of the Café des Allées sipping grenadine syrup charged with soda.

"May I sit down, Dariano?"

He rose with surprising alacrity for so great a body, pulled a chair up for her. . . .

"You remember asking me twice to marry you, Dariano?" She smiled at the fatuousness of her own question. As though one forgot!

"Yes," he said calmly.

"I'm sorry, Dariano," was all she told him.

"I suppose," he began after a minute's silence, "it was the young Pole."

"It was."

"You know," he said, "people kill themselves on failure in business, more often, indeed, than is ever reported. You know that."

"I do."

"Your father was on the Stock Exchange in New York. My dear, people kill themselves there."

"I know that," Angela said. "I know, too, that business in the main is, as you say, baccarat without the frills. But I'm afraid the frills are necessary to me, Dariano, to hide the ugliness of it. You may be right, Dariano. I don't know what right or wrong is, they are so involved. But if I were to marry you, Dariano, the face of the young Pole would be between me and you all the time, Dariano. What is ordinary routine of life to you, Dariano, is to me terrible. At least this instance of it."

"Don't think me too callous, Angela," the Greek told her. "I don't want to justify myself, or to appear decent in your eyes, but I did all I could. I offered to reimburse his mother and sister all he had lost, but they would have none of it. He was of my own religion, a Greek Catholic, and I had services said for him. I am not so callous as you think, Angela."

"Will the services put a foil in his hand again, contesting for his country's honour? Will the services give some young woman the handsome lover and husband she is hungry for? Will the services procreate strong, fine children? Forgive me, Dariano," she apologized. "I am a beast to hurt you, who have been so kind to me. But the thing unnerved me. I have not been able to touch a card since, nor ever will again. I am sorry I hurt you, Dariano; but it is a terribly vivid tragedy to me, how the young Pole died. I am a beast, and a fool, perhaps. You are as well rid of me, Dariano."

"It is because you say things like that, Angela, that I realize how much I have

missed. It is because you feel like that that I love you. But no more than you can change can I, young Angela. Fools have killed themselves before, playing baccarat or racing for wealth in other spheres, and fools and weak folk will do it again. I had thought you would never see this side of things—but, ah well——"

"I will put the young Pole out of my mind, Dariano, and always remember you as a fine, straight fighter. I shall always be"—she stopped suddenly, "always" would be such a short time now—"your friend, Dariano. Please forgive me for keeping you so long waiting for an answer, and for refusing in the end. But I am touchy about suicides at baccarat."

"Since you are not going to touch a card again, and since I have most of your money, let that be a wash-out too. It's about a million francs, isn't it?" He put his hand in his inside breast pocket where he carried his cheque book.

For an instant Angela knew what ter-

"I'd be a poor creature if I slid out without paying."

rible temptation was. If she accepted his offer she would be free again. But an inner voice said: "No, Angie, you can't fool yourself. You can't take it as a loan. You could never pay it back. You know now, and you could never look Dariano in the face again, no, nor yourself either. Better go down to Death with your chin high!"

So she said: "Put up your cheque book, Dariano. Of course I've lost more than I should have, more than I can afford. But I'd be a poor creature, wouldn't I, Dariano?" she smiled, "if I had the game and the chance, and then slid out without paying. You mean tremendously well, but I'm not that kind of sportsman."

He rose. "You are a great lady, Angela, and it's good to have known you. I may still call you Angela, may I not?"

"I wish you always to call me Angela, and to think of me as Angela," she said. "Good-bye, Dariano, and thank you. And it sounds foolish, does it not?—but: God bless you, Dariano!"

The Greek said nothing, but raised her firm, white hand to his lips and walked away. For the first time in her knowledge of him, he walked quickly.

CHAPTER XVIII

I

SO that she could go easily on her last journey, down the twilit, yew-bordered alleys of Death, chance seemed to favour her. Her mother had received an invitation to go to Bordighera for a week's dancing and bridge, and she left Var and Angela. "My big girl," she said, "can take care of herself, can't she? My big, sensible girl!" Angela felt she was being described as a Polish servant girl might be described, plain only as a Polish servant girl can be.

"And when I come back," twittered Mrs. Howard-Turnbull—twittering was a new accomplishment, "there may be some news for me of my big girl."

"I think there will be," said Angela grimly. Mrs. Howard-Turbull was thinking of Dariano, but Angela's thoughts were elsewhere.

"I do wish that provoking Morrie Sullivan would go home," said Mrs. Turnbull.

"Don't worry, Mother. I'll find a way to send him home."

"Oh, darling, will you?" Mrs. Turnbull fluttered. "Good-bye, darling. See you in a week or ten days."

"Good-bye, Mother," said Angela crisply. She never expected to see Mrs. Turnbull again.

She had told herself that the only way to get rid of Morrie was to agree to marry him, on condition he would leave immediately for the States, before her mother came back. Morrie knew that the only bar to Angela's returning was Mrs. Turnbull. Angela had never said so, but Morrie, in his deadly intuitive way, knew. She would tell Morrie she would follow, whether or not her mother approved, in a month or so. . . .

It was the only way to get rid of Morrie, she told herself, it was for his own good. When he was gone she would write him a letter saying that while she loved him, she

could never give up the bright life of the Riviera, and of the beaches of Normandy; that after the baccarat tables the quiet New England bridge games would be impossible. And she would confess she had fooled him, and that he must not write, must never think of her again. Then Morrie's caring, she thought, would turn to hatred, and putting her out of his mind, he would marry some decent New England girl, who would be a helpmate for him. . . . Her eyes were bathed in tears. . . .

And then she said: Can't you be honest, Angela? You do love him. It's impossible to marry, but what you want is his arms around you for a day or two, the caring of some half-hundred hours before you go through the surface of the earth to where, God knows, the old-fashioned New England hell may await you. A gambler and a suicide, on such as them, say old theologies, the gates of mercy are eternally locked. And in your bones you feel it, Angela. And what you want is to rise up early some morning and go with Morrie up the Alpine

gorges, seeing the little Alpine rivers rushing busily to the sea; watch the trout in the unbelievably clear water, lunch among the flowers, and then farther upward, to towns like Gourdon, which seems to stretch to Heaven—and that will be as near Heaven as ever you'll get, Angela—and then downward, through the terraces of orange blossom to the shore, while the sun goes down in scarlet and purple near Marseilles, and then all night dancing. . . .

And another day at Nice, wandering through the flower market, and sitting under awnings sipping apéritifs and watching the play of sunlight and shadow on the streets, and the funny Provençal people and the strange Arabs from across the sea. And then home through Cannes and Saint Paul, and by Antibes, and dancing until morning. And a little love and forgetfulness and farewell kisses at night. Isn't that what you want, Angela?

And she answered herself sullenly: "It is."

And she asked herself: "Is it fair to

Morrie? Is it a decent thing to do?" And the answer from herself came: "No!"

"Then are you going to do it, Angela?" And she raised her head and looked herself straight in the eye, and said: "Yes, I'm going to do it. I'm a thief and a liar, and a gambler. Well, I'm going to be a cheap coquette, too.

"And they can put on another bushel of coal in hell for me for that," she said. . . .

She had not been down to the Casino since the night of the young Pole's death, but, looking for Morrie after dinner, someone told her he had gone down early to the baccarat rooms. She was puzzled. What Morrie had to do with the baccarat rooms she couldn't understand. Would it be possible, she wondered, that one of these French hussies had succeeded in interesting Morrie? She herself had been so cold to him, and there were hundreds of women who had thrown interested glances at the tall, athletic figure with the bronzed face and quiet smile. Would it be possible? She said: "No!"

But she went down to the Casino.

At the entrance to the Nuncios' Restaurant she ran into the Kahns. They were a pleasant little American couple whom everybody liked. Dark, small, after fifteen years of marriage, they were the most devoted lovers in Var. They had big, kind hearts, and no pretensions. They spoke no French. They spoke little English. They used a dialect which they called "straight New York." She always spoke of him as "Husband," and he referred to her flippantly as "the Wiff." When either lost at baccarat the other was broken-hearted.

"That poor goil," Husband would say, "was sure born on Friday, the t'oiteenth."

"Poor Husband," Mrs. Kahn would say, "is that poor man losing again? I must go over and see if I can't change his luck."

They descended on Angela as she entered, their eyes shining with excitement.

"Say, kid," Husband announced, "you sure let a bear-cat loose on the Casino."

"Oh, Angie," the Wiff added, "that boy of yours is soitenly cleaning up."

"Morrie Sullivan? Is he playing?"

"Is he playing? It ain't play. It's murder. And listen, kid. I started him. Me, that's got the luck of a Yid in a Scotch village. I started him."

"Oh, how could you?" Angela was broken-hearted.

"How could I? And him socking 'em around the ring, hey? What's eetin' you. Say, listen, that guy was out playing golf with me this afternoon, and he slices his ball into the woods, and he goes in after it, and he finds it all tied up, and beside it, what do you t'ink. A swastikky! You know, one o' them good-luck things that looks like a cross all cock-eyed. But that was not'in!"

She paused and then went on.

"Listen, dearie, listen to Husband!"

"At the t'oiteenth hole, you know, the mashie pitch, he holes his tee-shot. What do you know about that?

"But that was not'in!"

"Wait till Husband tells you, dearie."

"At the club house a black cat comes up to where he's sittin' ruinin' a cocktail. And

it walks around him three times, left to right."

"Left to right, Angie."

"And then, what do you know? It jumps up on to his knees, and begins singing. And I says: 'If you don't go down and take a crack at that baccarat you're a sucker. You're worse than a sucker,' I says, 'you're yellow.'

"He says: 'Do you t'ink so?'

"I says: 'Hell, don't make me sick'."

"He comes up to Husband to-night—" said Mrs. Kahn.

"Here, who's telling this, Wiff, you or me? He comes up to me to-night, and he says: 'I got five hundred plunks I don't care if I lose,' he says, 'do you t'ink I ought to go it?'

"I say: 'Go it. They's only one pig in the race, and you're he.'

"And he sits down at the big table and he puts up a bank of ten thousand francs. Ten French grand!"

"Ten thousand francs!" Angela nearly screamed. Morrie to go plunging like that.

"And Dariano says: 'Banco.' And the kid gives Dariano baccarat.

"And he pulls it three times with a thirty thousand franc limit. He ain't got nothing in his mit but nines. The funny thing about it is: he's got Dariano's number, and he's got Dariano's goat.

"And, say: wait a minute," Husband called, as she moved away, "do you know what that guy's done now? He says he wants air, and they're pulled out the big baccarat table, and he's running the bank.

"Me, I'd go in wit' you, but I got a bum heart, and what that pal o' yours is doing ain't no rest cure . . ."

II

When she went through the doors, she noticed at once that the chemin-de-fer tables were abandoned, and that in the inner room, where the big baccarat game was wont to be, a crowd was standing about a table. As she went up to it, she noticed they

were on their feet, agog with excitement. The old sign was hung out, "Minimum punt, a thousand francs," and the croupier was calling out:

"Banque de deux cent milles francs! A bank of two hundred thousand francs. Gentlemen, to your game."

And then, a second later, while she was trying to edge her way, before she could see:

"A card for the right. A card for the left."

And then: *"Huit à la banque!* The bank has eight."

Was it Morrie, or was it Dariano? she asked herself with sick wonder. Perhaps in a coup or two Dariano had cleaned him out and was sitting victoriously in his place. She felt afraid and nervous, as she had never felt when gambling herself. She had a mad desire to rush in and pluck him from the game. He didn't know how terrible a game it was, how insidious. He must have won three hundred thousand and more by now. Sixteen, seventeen thousand dollars.

Could he not stop? If it were he, at all, and not Dariano . . .

Suddenly a player got up from the table and left, and as he went through a lane was made and she slipped to the edge of the table. Her heart gave a throb of relief. Yes, it was Morrie who was banker.

About him, around the table, were the rearguard of the season's gamblers—Italians, Frenchmen, an occasional Englishman, a woman or two. Opposite him, beside the croupier Dariano sat, his olive face as granite-like as ever. A mob—there was no word to describe them by but "mob"—of people stood back of the table, their faces, in Angela's sight, a furry white jungle, with eyes staring out of them like wild animals, like animals hungry for the great pile of notes in front of the croupier. And Morrie, calm and brown-faced, sat in front of the shoe. There was a deprecatory smile, as though he were sorry to take so much money from all about him.

The croupier had finished counting the bank.

"A bank of three hundred and seventy thousand francs!" he announced. "Gentlemen, play."

A pock-marked Egyptian with a drooping left eye put ten bundles of ten thousand francs each up.

"Monsieur accepte?" There was a sort of sneer in his tones.

"I'll accept your shoes," Morrie laughed.

Dariano slung in a bundle of notes carelessly. From the mob behind the pink slips of bank-notes showered like rose petals.

"Carte à droite. Gauche, non! A card for the right. Left hand stands."

"The bank has seven."

"Right, four. Left, six. The bank wins."

The table, the onlookers had started with a feeling of good will toward Morrie. They liked a good sport, a man who gave them a run for their money. Also, it was one of the miracles of the Riveria, this gigantic run of luck, which gave them somethink to talk over in the summer and to dream about, fancying it as happening to

themselves. But this was going a bit too far. Angela could feel the enmity of the room focusing on Morrie, like the sun's rays through a burning glass. Frenchmen were muttering about "dirty Americans," and the Egyptian was gazing at the boy with the dull stare of an asp.

"A bank of six hundred and twenty-two thousand francs," the croupier announced. "Gentlemen——"

Dariano had put out his broad brown hand and was patting the table. The croupier looked at him inquiringly.

"Banco!" said Dariano.

"*Tout seul?* All alone?"

"All alone!"

Some of the table scowled, and some of the table grinned. They knew what Dariano was about. He was trying to scare the boy out of his bank. Sullivan would pass the bank and his own good luck, and Dariano would take it and go ahead making money. Possibly, too, the youngster would begin betting against the lucky bank, and so lose all he had won. The history of the season

was full of such episodes, of beginners passing a gold mine and then bucking up. Certainly the lad would never accept Dariano's challenge.

But Morrie looked across at the Greek, and, "I'll go you!" he said.

Angela's heart grew cold. Her breast grew cold. She was cold from her feet to where her hair stood from her scalp. The table smiled. Ah, Dariano was caught in his own device. Quickly Morrie dealt the cards.

"I'll draw," said Dariano.

Morrie turned up his cards. He had two queens.

"They're pretty," he said. "They're nice girls, but they sure let me down."

And he gave Dariano a six.

"That gums it!" he said. And he drew a two.

"Well," he smiled, "I had a good run for my money." And he rose to go. But Dariano threw his hand down. He had drawn on a five.

"You win by a pip," the Greek told him.

"You'd have won anyway. You'd have drawn the six." He scrawled a cheque and gave it to the croupier.

"Thanks for the game," he said. He rose and went off.

"A bank of a million two hundred and eighty-one thousand francs. A bank of sixty-four thousand louis," called the croupier. "Gentlemen——"

"Nix, guy, nix!" Morrie got up. "I'm through!"

"Messieurs, Mesdames," the croupier translated with exquisite courtesy, "the game is over!"

CHAPTER XIX

HE brought Angela to a table in the Nuncios Restaurant. Before them, on the table, rested a pile of checks caught with a rubber band,—over a million and a quarter of francs.

"Well, that gets me out of a bit of a hole," he said.

"Oh, Morrie," Angela cried out, "you haven't been poor, have you? You haven't lost your farm, have you?"

"Nary a blade of grass," he told her. "Nary a hog. But, I don't like your mother, Angie. And to have to go and tell that hard-boiled old girl that you had blown half the family kitty at the tables, and ask her what she was going to do about it—well, it isn't a party. Now, I don't have to."

The blood left her face slowly, and she looked down at the table cloth. For an instant she was tempted to say: "I don't un-

derstand." But she looked up bravely and met his eyes.

"Morrie, how did you know?"

"Listen, Angela, because your mother hasn't a friend in the world, don't think you haven't. Angie, you didn't think you were going to get away with fifty thousand dollars of New Canaan coin and not have us wonder where it went? I'm a director in that bank, kid. You've been away too long.

"Now, listen to me, Angela"—his voice got commanding and sharp—"you put back that money to-morrow."

"But, Morrie, I can't ever pay it back."

"Oh, yes, you can," he laughed. "When you've worked twenty-five years as a farmer's wife you'll have it paid back."

"But, Morrie——"

"There are no 'buts.' Just listen to me."

"Yes, Morrie."

"To-morrow evening there's a rubberneck boat leaving for home from Monte. You can make that if you have to."

"Yes, Morrie."

"Well, you have to—that's all. We can

be married on board when we're three miles out. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Morrie. But Morrie, my mother ——"

"Listen, Angela!"

"Yes, Morrie."

"To hell with your mother!"

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